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# News Release

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## **Report: Pay Transparency Efforts Strengthen Equity in Illinois**

*University of Illinois report finds narrowing gender wage gaps yet continued disparities for Black and Hispanic workers in low-wage sectors*

**SPRINGFIELD** – A comprehensive new report released today by the University of Illinois’ Project for Middle Class Renewal (PMCR) finds that while Illinois has made meaningful progress toward gender pay equity since implementing pay data reporting requirements under a 2021 amendment to the Equal Pay Act of 2003 (EPA), significant occupational disparities in pay persist—particularly for Black and Hispanic workers in low-wage sectors.

The analysis, conducted by Dr. Tingting Zhang and Dr. Robert Bruno at the University of Illinois’ School of Labor and Employment Relations, reviewed data from more than **3.2 million job title records that nearly 4,000 private businesses** submitted to the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) through its Equal Pay Registration Certificate program between 2021 and 2023.

Key findings include:

- Women earn about 91–93 cents for every dollar earned by men in comparable roles, with the smallest gaps appearing in professional and managerial positions.
- Black and Hispanic workers earn approximately 90-94 cents for every dollar earned by White workers after controlling for job, firm, and region.
- Gender gaps have narrowed modestly in mid- and high-wage occupations but have widened for women in lower-wage roles.
- Cook County shows smaller gender gaps, while disparities are greater in downstate regions and in craft and service occupations.
- While gaps remain, Illinois is making meaningful progress, reflecting the impact of increased employer accountability, data transparency, and compliance efforts under the Equal Pay Act of 2003. The state is well positioned to further narrow the gender wage gap and solidify its leadership in pay equity reporting.

“By continuing to refine this reporting system, Illinois can remain a national leader in pay transparency,” **said Illinois Department of Labor Director Jane Flanagan**. “The Department will continue to use these data to guide enforcement and help employers build fairer, more equitable workplaces.”

The report recommends several steps to strengthen Illinois’ pay equity system, including:

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Jesse White State of Illinois Building  
115 S LaSalle Street  
Chicago, IL 60603  
(312) 793-2800  
Fax: (312) 793-5257

Regional Office Building  
2309 West Main Street, Suite 115  
Marion, Illinois 62959  
(618) 993-7090  
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- Improving data quality through standardized job titles and validation tools;
- Enhancing transparency with public dashboards and employer self-audit resources;
- Increasing interagency coordination to reduce reporting burdens; and
- Implementing a “flagging” system to identify employers with significant wage gaps for review and enforcement.
- Provide HR and business leaders with best practice tools for ensuring pay equity.

“The Illinois pay data reporting requirements provide an impactful opportunity to evaluate policy effects and support informed decisions about addressing pay equity,” **said Dr. Tingting Zhang, Assistant Professor of Labor and Employment Relations.**

“Ensuring pay equity does more than protect justice in the workplace,” **said Dr. Robert Bruno, Director of the Project for Middle Class Renewal.** “Paying workers fairly regardless of race or gender contributes to a lifetime of higher earnings.”

The Illinois Equal Pay Act, first enacted in 2003 and amended in 2021, requires private-sector employers with 100 or more Illinois-based employees to obtain an Equal Pay Registration Certificate by submitting demographic and wage data to IDOL. The goal is to ensure equitable pay practices and strengthen accountability among large employers.

The full report, *Illinois Equal Pay Act: Comprehensive Evaluation and Policy Recommendations (2021–2023)*, is available through the Project for Middle Class Renewal at [go.illinois.edu/PMCR](https://go.illinois.edu/PMCR).

