



New York State  
COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

March is Women's History Month and the 15<sup>th</sup> is Equal Pay Day. It is a day to draw attention to the historic and ongoing gender pay gap that leaves women still earning less than men for similar work. One way the pay gap manifests is at the sector level. Many women-dominated professions have long been grossly undervalued, paying the workforce low wages that do not reflect the importance of the work, or the skills required. Among those professions are the child care, home care and the human services sectors, all of which pay shockingly low wages for work essential to the basic functioning and well-being of our communities. The members of these workforces care for our children, our parents, the disabled, and our loved ones.

Now is the time for our Governor and Legislators to show appreciation for the women working in these sectors by increasing their salaries to reflect the incredible importance of the work they are doing. They need and deserve "real" annual raises in pay, not bonuses and/or inadequate cost of living adjustments. We have the means to provide these long overdue salary increases, now all we need is the will.

### **Childcare/Early Childhood Workforce**

The early childhood workforce in New York State is 96 percent female. In addition, over half of the overall early childhood workforce identifies in racial categories other than white, with 23% identifying as Latinx, 17% as Black, 7% as Asian, and 9% as other. New York's gradual adoption of a \$15/hour minimum wage has created some improvements in compensation; however, nearly two-thirds (65%) of childcare worker families across the state receive support from one or more public income support programs.

### **Homecare Workforce**

Fully 91% of direct care workers are women and nearly 77% are women of color. Despite their important contributions to long-term care and the broader economy, economic self-sufficiency remains an elusive goal for many direct care workers. Median annual earnings for these workers in New York State are only \$21,100. As a result of low wages and annual earnings, 45 percent of the state's direct care workers live in or near poverty (below 200 percent of the federal poverty level) and 51 percent rely on public assistance.

### **Human Service Workforce**

Human services workers are overwhelmingly female (66%), over two-thirds are full-time workers of color (68%), and nearly half (46%) are women of color. As such, pay disparities in this sector have important consequences for race and gender equity. New York State's statutory cost of living adjustment (COLA) was deferred for over a decade which stripped essential human services workers of over a half-billion dollars in pay. Poverty pay in the core human services sector means that 15% of all workers (both full- and part-time) qualified for food stamps in 2016-18.

*On Equal Pay Day, let's remember: When we invest in women, we lift the entire community.*

#FairPay4HomeCare | #NYSUniversalChildCare | #JustPay