

Councilman Callahan proposing a wage equality ordinance

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government, Serious Issues December 14, 2019

Councilman Callahan will be introducing this “wage equality” ordinance at Council next Tuesday night. Click the link for the full text.

Callahan Wage Equality Ordinance

“The premise of this ordinance is that salary offers should be based upon the specific job responsibilities of a position, and not based upon an applicant’s prior wage history, so as to avoid the perpetuation of gender wage inequalities.”

This idea has been aborning for a while. Gadfly first heard Councilman Callahan talk about it a meeting of Bethlehem Democrats last February. He provides good context.

AUDIO FILES NOT AVAILABLE IN THIS ARCHIVE

See also: [Nicole Radzievich](#), “Councilman Bryan Callahan wants to stop Bethlehem businesses from asking job applicants this question.” Morning Call, January 31, 2019.

CITY OF BETHLEHEM

City Council Memorandum

SUBJECT: Proposed Ordinance - Wage Equality
TO: Members of Council
FROM: Bryan G. Callahan, Member of Council
DATE: December 13, 2019

Attached is a proposed ordinance to establish a new Article of the City's Codified Ordinances. This ordinance is designed to combat widespread gender-based wage inequalities by prohibiting employer inquiries into prospective employee wage histories, as well as employer reliance on such wage histories for determining compensation.

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, women are paid 79 cents for every dollar a man makes, according to a United States Census Bureau 2015 report. Women of color are paid even less. African American women are paid only 68 cents to the dollar paid to a man, Latinas are paid only 56 cents to the dollar paid to men, and Asian women are paid 81 cents to the dollar paid to men. The gender wage gap has narrowed by less than one-half a penny per year in the United States since 1963, when the Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, the first law aimed at prohibiting gender-based pay discrimination.

Since women are paid on average lower wages than men, basing wages upon a worker's wage at a previous job only serves to perpetuate gender wage inequalities and leave families with less money to spend on food, housing, and other essential goods and services. The premise of this ordinance is that salary offers should be based upon the specific job responsibilities of a position, and not based upon an applicant's prior wage history, so as to avoid the perpetuation of gender wage inequalities.

I would appreciate Council's consideration of the attached ordinance.

Thank you.

Bryan G. Callahan RSV

Bryan G. Callahan, Member of Council