



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony  
Bill 4-19 – Personnel – Merit System – Requesting Salary History – Prohibited  
Tuesday, March 26, 2019

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Community Action Board Member

Good afternoon. My name is Lisette Engel and I am a member of the Community Action Board's Executive Committee.

As advocates for the low-income community, the Community Action Board strongly supports Bill 4 – 19. Our Board's role is to advocate for policies and programs that will promote equity and help County residents move towards self-sufficiency. By prohibiting the use of salary history to determine pay for County merit staff positions, those who have faced previous discrimination based on gender and/or race, will be in a better position to improve their situations.

Despite the fact that Montgomery County is one of the wealthiest counties in the country, the gender pay gap exists for men and women at every level of educational attainment. In addition to median incomes for men being significantly higher than for women, the poverty rate for female-headed households is significantly higher. While the poverty rate for all families in the County is 7.1%, the poverty rate for female-headed households with children under 18 is 22.6%.<sup>1</sup>

Our Board has been a longtime advocate for the Self-Sufficiency Standard, which provides a more accurate measure of the true cost of living in a given geographic area for a specific family type. The gender pay gap is quite pronounced when looking at the Standard. Countywide, 31%

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<sup>1</sup> American Community Survey [census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

of female householders are below the Self-Sufficiency Standard, while only 25% of male householders are below the Standard. This difference is even more extensive in certain parts of the County, such as Germantown and Montgomery Village, where I live. In this area, the difference between female and male householders living below the Standard is 10%.<sup>2</sup>

This bill would also address pay equity issues that disproportionately impact racial minorities. Structural racism continues to prevent many people from getting ahead, and certain hiring practices, such as asking for salary histories and basing salary offers on that history, only perpetuate the problem. The impact of such practices, in addition to other structural barriers that may prevent people from having the same opportunities to “get ahead” is quite clear. While 14% of white householders are below the Self-Sufficiency Standard, 44% of black or African American householders and 54% of Hispanic or Latino householders are not earning wages at the Standard.

Bill 4-19 is an important step in addressing pay equity in the County. The Community Action Board encourages the Council to explore additional policies that can help residents move towards self-sufficiency, including increasing wages and work supports, expanding affordable housing options, increasing child care options for lower-income families, and continuing to support a strong Working Families Income Supplement.

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<sup>2</sup> Montgomery County Interactive Self-Sufficiency Standard [montgomerycountymd.gov/communityaction](https://montgomerycountymd.gov/communityaction)