

**Item Title:** Report from the Wake County Task Force on Employment and Wage Issues for Women

**Specific Action Requested:**

**That the Wake County Board of Commissioners receives the report from the Task Force on Employment and Wage Issues for Women.**

**Item Summary:**

The Wake County Commission for Women is a Wake County Board of Commissioner appointed body. On February 1, 2016 the Commission presented a report titled *State of Employment for Women in Wake County* to the Wake County Board of Commissioners. In response to the Report the Wake County Board of Commissioners established the Wake County Task Force on Employment and Wage Issues for Women. The Task Force was comprised of representatives from the Commission for Women, and community, business, education, non-profit and government leaders dedicated to addressing some of the pressing employment needs of women in Wake County. Since May 2016 the Task Force met monthly to discuss and develop strategic initiatives to combat wage and employment issues facing Wake County women.

Research in the February 1, 2016 report and substantiated by the work of this Task Force reveal a significant gap in income between men and women in Wake County. For example, in 2014, the median earning for women over the age of 25 was \$34,809. Men however earned a median income of \$50,137. This significant disparity in income exists despite similar education. The income disparity becomes even more distinct as the education level of women increases. While a woman with less than a high school degree earns approximately 67% of what a man with less than a high school degree earns (a difference in income of approximately \$6,000/year), a women with a graduate degree earns less than 56% of her male counterpart (a difference in income of over \$40,000).

Issues explored in depth by the Task Force include what impediments women face in seeking and obtaining well-paying part-time and full-time work; whether income disparity exists between the sexes in Wake County; and why women struggle after returning to the work force and whether existing programs are helping with their struggles. These issues are complex, including but not limited to the challenges listed above as well as lack of affordable childcare; lack of transportation; ageism; lack of necessary job-specific skills. In order to narrow the focus of work, the Task Force decided early on to address and present recommendations on the following issues:

- Exploring reasons for the wage gender gap and what can be done to close it;
- Partnering with companies, government entities and nonprofit agencies to create return to work programs- paid internships for women interested in returning to the workforce after taking time off to care for children, an illness or a sick family member; and

- Developing methods to better educate women on the tactics of proper salary negotiation so they understand the best ways to advocate for fair wages, good benefits and appropriate time off.

**Attachments:**

1. Women's Task Force - Draft Report (5 29)
2. EXHIBIT B (Wake County Commission on Women Pay Gap Report Final)
3. EXHIBIT C (Wake County Gender Pay Survey Report)
4. EXHIBIT D (Dress for Success Nov. 2015 Survey Data)