



AAUW-VA supports [SB 215](#).

1. Why the pay gap is a problem in Virginia

- **The gap is real money for Virginia families.**

In Virginia, in 2023 women working full time earned **about 79 cents for every dollar paid to men** – roughly **\$300 less per week**, or nearly **\$15,000 less per year** for the typical woman worker. That’s a mortgage payment, child-care costs, or a year of community-college tuition, missing from women’s paychecks.

- **This hits the whole state economy.**

When women are underpaid, families have less to spend in local businesses, less to save, and less to invest in education and retirement. Closing the gap would mean more stable households and a stronger Virginia economy, not just bigger paychecks for individual women.

2. Different women, different gaps

- **There isn’t one pay gap in Virginia – there are many.**

The “cents on the dollar” figure is an average. Like every state, Virginia sees **larger gaps for many women of color**, disabled women, immigrant women, and women in low-wage jobs. Black and Latina women, for example, typically earn far less than white, non-Hispanic men doing full-time work.

- **That means the women who can least afford it lose the most.**

These are the workers holding Virginia’s care jobs, service jobs, and essential frontline roles. When their pay is held down, the gap widens not only by gender but by race and class.

3. Why salary history is “tying an anvil to someone’s ankle”

- **Basing a new job offer on old pay bakes discrimination in.**

If your first salary was set too low because of bias, caregiving breaks, or being steered into a lower-paid job, **carrying that number from job to job is like tying an anvil to your ankle**. Every new offer gets anchored to a discriminatory starting point instead of what the job is actually worth.

- **Salary history questions punish women and people of color for past underpayment.**

Women in Virginia already earn less on average. When employers ask, “What were you making before?” they’re effectively asking, “How much less have you been underpaid – so we can match it?” That’s why so many experts say salary-history questions perpetuate wage gaps, rather than reflect merit.

4. Why this bill matters – and what else Virginia needs

- **This legislation is a practical, common-sense fix.**

Barring employers from asking about salary history, and requiring them to post or share pay ranges, helps ensure **each job is priced for the job, not the applicant’s past disadvantages**. Research from multiple states shows salary history bans help narrow gender and racial pay gaps, especially for women and workers of color changing jobs.

- **It’s a big step – but not the only one.**

Alongside this bill, Virginia can strengthen equal-pay enforcement, support pay-transparency policies, raise the wage floor, and expand access to child care and paid leave. All of those reduce the penalties women face for being caregivers and for working in undervalued jobs.

5. Where individual action fits – and its limits

- **AAUW helps women build their own bargaining power.**

Through AAUW’s **Work Smart** and **Money Smart** trainings, women learn how to research the market, know their worth, and negotiate for fair pay and better benefits. These are powerful tools for individual workers.

- **But you can’t negotiate away a systemic pay gap.**

Even the best negotiator is still operating inside a system where women in Virginia start out earning less. That’s why we need **both**: personal tools like negotiation training **and** strong policies like this salary-history ban. The law helps level the playing field so individual women aren’t forced to fight the same bias over and over at every new job.

Closing statement:

In Virginia, women are still paid less than men, and the gaps are even bigger for Black and Latina women. When employers base a new offer on someone’s past salary, they’re locking in yesterday’s discrimination instead of paying what the job is actually worth. Banning salary-history questions is a simple way to stop tying an anvil to women’s ankles and start giving every worker a fair shot.