



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **WAKE COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN RELEASES STATE OF EMPLOYMENT FOR WOMEN REPORT**

*Finds income gap between men and women in county exceeds national average*

The [Wake County Commission for Women](#) (WCCW) has spent the past four months researching how women in Wake County are faring in the workforce. WCCW representatives presented their findings and recommendations to the Wake County Board of Commissioners at last night's meeting.

"I appreciate the hard work the Commission for Women put into developing this eye-opening report," said Commissioner Caroline Sullivan. "It reveals statistics that we need to hear, such as the median earnings for women over age 25 are about 30-percent less than their male counterparts. Armed with this knowledge, we can make governing decisions to help shrink the wage gap and support women in our community."

The WCCW collected information for the 31-page report from several different sources. It surveyed nearly 300 women who were clients of the local, non-profit Dress for Success of the Triangle to accurately gather insight into the issues facing women in the Wake County workforce today. In addition, it included data from Wake County Human Services and other independent research sources.

Some of the questions the WCCW explored were:

- What kinds of challenges do women encounter while seeking and obtaining employment?
- Is there a wage gap between men and women in Wake County?
- Why do some women struggle after returning to the workforce?
- What resources are available to women who want to go back to work after a period of unemployment?

After reviewing the data collected, WCCW made several key findings. They include:

- The county has some of the most expensive childcare services in the state, often costing more than the annual in-state tuition at a North Carolina public college.

- There is a significant gap in income between men and women in Wake County. Median earnings for women over age 25 are only 69 percent of that for men. That is 10-percent lower than the national average.
- More than 79,000 women have only a high school degree or never graduated. In 2014, more than half of the women with a high school degree lived in poverty in the county.
- More than 50 percent of women in the county seeking care for mental health concerns are unemployed.
- Very few resources are available to women looking for a job after taking a break from work for an extended period of time for reasons such as illness, child rearing or taking care of a family member.

Based on these findings, the WCCW made the following recommendations to the board:

- Incentivize private employers to help ease the burden of paying the high cost of childcare;
- Develop a partnership between Wake Technical Community College and Wake County Human Services to expand existing GED programs to include college-level offerings;
- Work with private employers to reduce the stigma associated with mental health treatment and care through education;
- Encourage workplace flexibility to help close the gender income gap;
- Offer “return to work” programs and paid internships for women who have taken a break from the workforce; and
- Create a task force to take action on these recommendations and evoke real change in our community.

The State of Employment for Women Report is available [online](#) on the WCCW website.

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