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“What I Would Do Without the Wage Gap” Essay

This month, we celebrated Mother's Day by honoring the commitments mothers make to their families. As I reflect on my own upbringing, and the dilemmas surrounding the gender wage gap, I can't help but think that finding a long-term solution to this problem will involve supporting moms with more than just a holiday, but a concerted effort to address the hardships they face.

Moms, and the families they build, should be the center of any policy that seeks to address poverty and economic justice. The question isn't necessarily what I would do without the wage gap, but instead what should do as a community to secure the promise of equality that this nation was built on. Too often, women are forced to make the choice of pursuing a rewarding career or being present in their children's lives. This is even more difficult for women and children in single-parent households. If we are committed to closing the gender wage gap, we need to have a serious conversation about the importance of families whether they be nuclear, LGBT, single-parent, or anything in-between.

While this may seem like an ambitious agenda, there are common-sense policy changes that we have the power to make now. We need to provide better job-training efforts so that women, especially from less affluent backgrounds have a shot at developing the skills needed to bring themselves and their families out of poverty. Mothers who have access to fair wages will be able contribute to our society by not only being productive citizens, but also by raising the next generation of smart and compassionate leaders. We also need to make sure that we have robust laws that protect women from gender discrimination in the work place.

One of the political sagas that has highlighted the fight for gender equality has been the passage of The Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act in 2009. This law helps prevent sex-based pay discrimination by giving women a fair opportunity to file suits against employers. However, laws like the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act do more than just provide legal relief, they start a conversation about gender discrimination that our nation desperately needs to have. We need to open more dialogues about this issue, and we can do that by creating laws that protect a woman's opportunity to succeed. Sexism undermines the values of our nation and we cannot let it stand.