

October 22, 2015

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Murray,

The Pension Rights Center is writing in strong support of the Women's Pension Protection Act of 2015 (WPPA), a bill to improve retirement security for our nation's women.

The Pension Rights Center is the oldest consumer organization in the country dedicated exclusively to promoting and protecting the retirement rights of workers, retirees and their families. In this role, we have a long history of supporting legislation seeking to improve women's retirement security. In fact, women's protection provisions in five federal laws are traceable directly to Center initiatives. But, as your report "Women and the Retirement Gap" documents there is a great deal still to be done.

According to your report, women are twice as likely as men to live in poverty after age 65. Women are also almost twice as likely to work part-time as men, and to work in lower-paying jobs. These types of jobs are far less likely to offer employer-sponsored retirement plans than jobs held primarily by men, and the low pay provides women fewer resources to save for retirement when they do have retirement plans through their workplace.

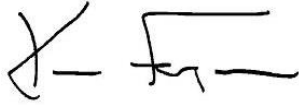
The problems facing women in retirement call for a wide range of policy fixes, including strengthening and expanding Social Security and private retirement plans. Your bill addresses three specific private retirement plan issues, all of which can have a significant impact on women's resources in retirement.

First, the bill extends current spousal protections for traditional defined benefit pension plans to defined contribution plans such as 401(k) plans by requiring a spouse to consent before assets can be removed from the plan when a worker leaves employment. As defined contribution plans are rapidly becoming the most common type of employer-sponsored retirement plan, it is essential to provide this level of protection to ensure that one spouse cannot drain the couple's retirement savings simply by changing jobs or upon retirement.

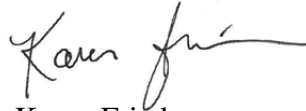
Finally, your bill dedicates funding to support improved women's financial literacy through a grant program overseen by the Department of Labor. The new grant program could be very helpful to women (and men), particularly if financial literacy includes information about retirement plan rules, hidden fees, and resources to help women (and men) obtain the benefits they have earned.

The Women's Pension Protection Act of 2015 would help women achieve a financially secure retirement. The Pension Rights Center thanks you for your leadership on behalf of women's retirement security and we look forward to working with you to advance your legislation in the 114th Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Ferguson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Karen Ferguson
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen Friedman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karen Friedman
Executive Vice President and Policy Director