

**COLUMBIA** – Today, members of the American Association of University Women of South Carolina (AAUW-SC) met with legislators to advocate for issues that improve the lives of women and girls.

“We believe it's important for women in South Carolina to inform their legislators about issues that matter to women and their families,” said State President Carol Tempel. *“Elected officials need to know that we will hold them accountable for their actions--or inaction--on issues impacting gender equity. AAUW-SC is bringing our research and advocacy to the State House.”*

### **Pay Equity**

Job creation and economic opportunity are critical issues for women, many of whom continue to struggle with economic insecurity and wage discrimination. Despite having federal legislation on the books since 1963 (Equal Pay Act), the gender wage gap persists. Nationally, on average, women who work full-time, year-round bring home about 80 cents for every dollar a full-time male worker earns. In South Carolina the ratio of the earnings of men and women ranges from 75.6 percent to 84.6 percent, with Congressional District 6 having the largest gap and District 2 the smallest. Nationally, SC ranks 35th on its median annual earnings ratio by gender (2016 data).

South Carolina has one of the weakest equal pay laws in the country. We need to pass HB 3599 so that everyone can take home a fair wage. This bill would establish basic protections, including protecting employees from retaliation for discussing wages and ensuring that workers who have been wronged are able to collect lost wages and damages. It's time for South Carolina's laws to catch up with the reality of the modern workplace. It's time to recognize that data sharing occurs regularly, and it helps to eliminate the pay gap. These protections are critical to ending the pay gap, and AAUW-SC urges legislators to support them by voting for HB 3599.

### **Reproductive Health**

AAUW-SC trusts that every woman has the ability to make her own informed choices regarding her reproductive life within the dictates of her own moral and religious beliefs. Further, AAUW believes that these deeply personal decisions should be made without government interference.

Advocates from AAUW-SC today urged legislators to oppose SB 217, a dangerous bill that would drastically limit access to reproductive health care. If passed, SB 217 would outlaw widely used and effective hormonal contraceptives, restrict the use of fertility treatments, subject women who suffer pregnancy-related complications or miscarriage to potential legal charges, and ban all abortions with only extremely limited exceptions. This bill is part of a dangerous, out-of-touch, and coordinated effort to chip away at health care access, and AAUW-SC strongly opposes it.

### **Voting Rights**

AAUW-SC has long advocated expanding voting rights and ensuring equitable political participation and representation. But poorly drawn or purposefully unfair electoral district lines threaten these ideals. With the 2020 census looming, many advocates, legislators, and judges are taking a hard look at their electoral district boundaries.

HB 4456 would create an independent redistricting commission. Under this new structure, district lines could not explicitly be drawn to favor or impede a political party or incumbent, and public engagement in the redistricting process would be required.

AAUW-SC strongly supports this proposal.

## **Violence Prevention**

AAUW- SC advocates freedom from violence and fear of violence in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities. We are proud of our co-sponsorship of a resolution regarding the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) with the City of Charleston.

To this end, AAUW-SC supports SB 516. This bill would require courts to report information about convictions  $\frac{3}{4}$  including those related to domestic violence, restraining orders, stalking or harassment  $\frac{3}{4}$  to law enforcement more quickly to help with background checks prior to gun purchases. It would also extend the amount of time to run a background check from three to five days. AAUW-SC encourages legislators to support this bill.

### **Quote from Carol Tempel, President of SC AAUW**

*Today and for all the tomorrows that follow, SC AAUW stands for empowering women and girls. We work steadily to advance equity for women and girls through our advocacy, education, philanthropy and research.*

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*AAUW-SC is an affiliate of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), a national, state, and local network of members who work together to improve the lives of millions of women and their families on issues related to education, economic security, Title IX, and civil rights.*



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