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PRESS RELEASE

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Advocates and Elected Officials Convene on Latina Equal Pay Day to Discuss Pay Gaps for Women of Color, the Impact of COVID, and Ways to Advance Equity

CHICAGO – Today, Latina Equal Pay Day, hundreds of people gathered for a virtual event hosted by the Equal Pay Day Chicago coalition. “Half-Paid Heroes: Working Women, COVID-19, and #LatinaEqualPay Day” brought together community leaders and elected officials to discuss the disproportionate impact of the wage gap on Latinas and other women of color, how COVID-19 is exacerbating already-existing racial and gender disparities, and what we can all do to advocate for pay equity. Panelists included Illinois State Rep. **Anna Moeller**; **Cherita Ellens**, President and CEO of Women Employed; Illinois Lieutenant Governor **Juliana Stratton**; **Linda Xóchitl Tortolero**, President and CEO of Mujeres Latinas en Acción; and Illinois Comptroller **Susana Mendoza**. The event was moderated by **Kelly Saulsberry**, Director of Policy and Outreach for the City of Chicago, Commission on Human Relations.

“This year, the Equal Pay Day Chicago coalition held our annual event on Latina Equal Pay day instead of the ‘average’ Equal Pay Day because the average pay gap doesn’t tell the whole story,” said **Barb Yong** of Golan Christie Taglia LLP, chair of the Equal Pay Day Chicago coalition. “We need to lift up all women in this movement for pay equity. And even though we decided to make this shift before COVID-19, the pandemic’s impact on women of color makes the timing of this conversation even more urgent.”

“When we discuss the gender wage gap, it is important to recognize the true barriers Latinas face,” said **Linda Xóchitl Tortolero**, President & CEO of Mujeres Latinas en Acción. “By holding this event on Latina Equal Pay Day, we put the experiences of women of color at the forefront. Every woman deserves a fighting chance to help their families thrive—something that’s been made even more clear during this unprecedented public health emergency.”

“Latinas, like many other women of color, face the dual impacts of gender and racial discrimination, resulting in wider wage gaps that leave them with less wealth and fewer resources to weather a crisis like COVID-19,” said **Cherita Ellens**, President & CEO of Women Employed. “They are also more likely to work in ‘essential’ jobs, and to have lost their jobs in this pandemic. We will never achieve pay equity unless we address the systemic barriers that continue to impact working women of color in this country.”

"COVID-19 has amplified the economic disparities in this country that disproportionately impact Latinas and other women of color. For far too long, we have been denied equal access to job opportunities, wages, and promotions," said Lt. Governor **Juliana Stratton**. "The state of Illinois is actively fighting these inequities and this conversation will arm us all with the ideas, resources and networking we need to close the pay gap."

"Women deserve the dignity and economic security that comes with equal pay," said Illinois Comptroller **Susana Mendoza**. "I'm proud that my office has taken steps to close the pay gap and offer more opportunities to women, especially Black; Latina and Asian-American women. Let Latina Equal Pay Day remind us that a greater investment in Latina women means a brighter future for them, their families, and all of us."

"In Illinois we have taken important steps to close the gender wage gap but there is so much more that needs to be done to ensure that all women and in particular Latina and Black women, are paid what they are worth in the work place," said Illinois State Representative **Anna Moeller**. "I applaud the organizers of this event for shining a bright light on this issue and bringing us together to discuss this urgent and important topic."

Half-Paid Heroes is the 10th annual event planned by the Equal Pay Day Chicago coalition. This year, rather than holding the event on the 'average' Equal Pay Day, observed in March, we chose to center on the experiences of women of color, who often face much wider wage gaps due to the compounding effects of gender and racial discrimination. While the 'average' woman makes 82 cents to the average man's dollar, Black women make 62 cents to a white man's dollar, Indigenous women make 60 cents, and Latinas make just 55 cents, on average. Latina Equal Pay Day is the last equal pay day observed in 2020, and by holding Chicago's event on this day, we recognize that we will not close the gender wage gap until every woman is compensated with equal pay for equal work.

For access to the full program recording, contact Ximena Leyte Escalante at xescalante@womenemployed.org, or 312-782-3902, x227. You can also view the event on Equal Pay Day Chicago's Facebook page: <https://facebook.com/equalpaydaychicago>

For additional statements from Equal Pay Day Chicago member organizations on this shift, visit <https://www.equalpaydaychi.xyz/press.html/#member>

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About Equal Pay Day Chicago: Equal Pay Day Chicago is a coalition of over 70 organizations, businesses and government agencies with a common goal of eliminating the pay gap. For more information, visit equalpaydaychi.xyz, or follow @EqualPayDayChic [Twitter](#), @EqualPayDayChicago on [Facebook](#), and @EqualPayDayChi on [Instagram](#).