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HR 1024

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5 By: Representatives Leding, C. Armstrong, E. Armstrong, Baine, Broadaway, J. Edwards, Hawthorne,
6 Hodges, Holcomb, Julian, Kizzia, Love, Magie, McGill, Nickels, B. Overbey, Ratliff, Richey, Sabin, T.
7 Thompson, D. Whitaker

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

10 TO SUPPORT AND PROMOTE THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
11 ADVANCEMENT OF ARKANSAS WOMEN BY ENCOURAGING THE
12 GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AND STATE, COUNTY, AND LOCAL
13 GOVERNMENTS, AND PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EMPLOYERS TO
14 IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS DEVELOPED BY INTERIM
15 STUDY PROPOSAL 2011-032.

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Subtitle

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19 TO SUPPORT AND PROMOTE THE ECONOMIC AND
20 SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT OF ARKANSAS WOMEN BY
21 ENCOURAGING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
22 RECOMMENDATIONS DEVELOPED BY INTERIM
23 STUDY PROPOSAL 2011-032.

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26 WHEREAS, HB1911 of 2011 calling for the collection of data to
27 determine women's economic status and other issues in Arkansas was referred
28 for interim study, recognizing that based on various studies, in particular a
29 2002 Institute for Women's Policy Research report, "The Status of Women in
30 the States", that women in Arkansas fare poorly economically and that wide
31 disparities were based on gender, race, ethnicity and region-based factors;
32 and

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34 WHEREAS, the study entitled "Women's Social and Economic Status in
35 Arkansas, Interim Study Proposal 2011-032" was released in 2012 and concluded
36 that women in Arkansas fare poorly in a variety of areas including health,



1 education, human trafficking, and economic status; and

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3 WHEREAS, women's economic insecurity is exacerbated by disparities
4 between men's and women's wages; and

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6 WHEREAS, women-owned firms in Arkansas make up 24.5% of the total firms
7 in the state, 4 percentage points lower than the national rate of 28.7%; and

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9 WHEREAS, although women-owned businesses make up nearly 25% of all
10 businesses in the state, the Office of State Procurement awarded just 2.3% of
11 state contracts exceeding \$25,000 to women-owned businesses during the 2011
12 calendar year; and

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14 WHEREAS, Arkansas women working full-time are paid approximately 82
15 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts; and

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17 WHEREAS, a lack of employment opportunities, a lack of appropriate job
18 skills and training, and a lack of adequate child care are factors that
19 affect women's employment opportunities; and

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21 WHEREAS, the common public perception that prostitution is a victimless
22 crime has led to Arkansas's human trafficking problem being a low priority
23 for law enforcement and too few resources being dedicated to eradicating
24 prostitution or responding to incidents involving commercial sex where actors
25 are believed to be adults; and

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27 WHEREAS, the study found that the public stigma placed on reputed
28 "prostitutes" inhibits victim reporting, and prevents a closer look into the
29 circumstances surrounding each individual's involvement in the commercial sex
30 industry and the discovery of forced or coerced participation; and

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32 WHEREAS, women in nearly a quarter of Arkansas counties are expected to
33 die younger than they were a generation ago; and

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35 WHEREAS, the health of Arkansas women is threatened by a number of
36 factors, including, but not limited to: high rates of heart disease, stroke,

1 cancer, lung disease, and obesity; and

2
3 WHEREAS, women in Arkansas face poverty-related barriers to their good
4 health and well-being, including lack of support to consumers to navigate the
5 health care system, lack of insurance options, lack of evidence-based
6 substance abuse and mental health treatment, and workforce shortages in
7 primary care and dental care; and

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9 WHEREAS, a majority of non-elderly adults receiving Medicaid in
10 Arkansas are women; and

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12 WHEREAS, among Arkansas adults, 20% read at or below the 5th-grade
13 level, hindering health literacy and the ability to understand and use
14 information in health-promoting ways; and

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16 WHEREAS, Arkansas ranks among the lowest in the United States in the
17 percentage of women 25 years of age or older with a bachelor's degree,
18 leading
19 to fewer job opportunities and lower earning potential for women; and

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21 WHEREAS, the subjects young women are encouraged to study is important
22 in determining the jobs that Arkansas women eventually will pursue; and

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24 WHEREAS, only 7% of female professionals are employed in the relatively
25 high-paying computer and engineering fields, compared to 38% of men; and

26
27 WHEREAS, in spite of inroads made towards equality in collegiate
28 athletics under Title IX, female student-athletes do not receive the same
29 level of financial support as male student-athletes; and

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31 WHEREAS, women hold far fewer leadership positions at all levels of the
32 education spectrum, from elementary school through college; and

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34 WHEREAS, based on its findings, the study recommends that the General
35 Assembly:

- 36 (1) Pass a paid family leave law for parents;

1 (2) Pass legislation requiring the Office of State Procurement
2 and procurement offices in state agencies to revise their contracting and
3 purchasing policies to provide more contracting opportunities for women-owned
4 businesses by creating a program to set aside certain state contracts as
5 specifically for women-owned businesses;

6 (3) Require businesses seeking contracts with state agencies to
7 demonstrate their commitment to identifying and combating pay inequality and
8 job segregation by sex;

9 (4) Implement pay equity reforms and create a Pay Equity Task
10 Force to provide recommendations for achieving pay equity among public and
11 private employers and to study sections of the proposed federal Paycheck
12 Fairness legislation on training, negotiation skills, research, education,
13 and outreach;

14 (5) Reinstate the Arkansas Women's Commission for the purposes
15 of:

16 (A) Developing a permanent advisory council on poverty
17 reduction and economic opportunity to coordinate efforts to reduce poverty in
18 Arkansas and evaluate the progress and effectiveness of anti-poverty
19 initiatives; and

20 (B) Establishing a consumer advisory council to identify
21 policy changes and areas for improvement in the state's processes for
22 awarding and distributing public health benefits;

23 (6) Support meaningful human trafficking reforms;

24 (7) Support school-based community health centers to:

25 (A) Expand to include targeted wellness services for women
26 in the communities served, especially Medicaid-eligible services for women;

27 (B) Expand mental health services at existing school-based
28 community health centers;

29 (C) Promote and develop health literacy;

30 (D) Collect and analyze data for feasibility studies to be
31 presented to designated legislative committees for further recommendations;
32 and

33 (E) Establish a center for health literacy to coordinate
34 and fund activities that improve health literacy in Arkansas;

35 (8) Support data collection and research in which the Arkansas
36 Public School Resource Center, the Department of Education, and the

1 Department of Higher Education collect and publicly report gender-specific
2 data on educational performance and graduation rates; and

3 (9) Support education initiatives designed to improve quality
4 education for female students in Arkansas, pre-kindergarten through higher
5 education by:

6 (A) Promoting parent involvement, opportunities for female
7 students to learn and excel in historically male-dominated fields of study,
8 sports participation, and the inclusion of women's history and accomplishment
9 in school curricula; and

10 (B) Encouraging the expansion of junior and senior
11 counseling opportunities for female students to learn about existing and
12 emerging fields of study and jobs with economic potential that traditionally
13 have been associated with males, recruitment efforts of women in male-
14 dominated fields of study by the state's higher education institutions, and
15 an increase in emphasis on partnerships between two-year and four-year higher
16 educational institutions and local high schools to foster learning
17 opportunities for female students in historically male-dominated fields of
18 study,

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21 NOW, THEREFORE,

22 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EIGHTY-NINTH GENERAL
23 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

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25 THAT the House of Representatives strongly supports the recommendations
26 to the General Assembly found in the report entitled "Women's Social and
27 Economic Status in Arkansas, Interim Study Proposal 2011-032", and supports
28 and promotes the economic and social advancement of Arkansas women by
29 encouraging the General Assembly, state, county, and local governments, and
30 public and private employers to implement the recommendations of the report.

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