

## **For Immediate Release on January 5, 2021**

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### **Northern Light Sued for Paying Female Psychologist Less than 60% of Pay for Males**

*Sex Discrimination and Retaliation Lawsuit filed in Bangor federal court*

This morning Dr. Clare E. Mundell filed a civil rights lawsuit against Acadia Hospital and Northern Light Health for unequal pay, sex discrimination, and unlawful retaliation for her opposition to her unequal pay. She filed her complaint in the Bangor federal district court.

After nearly two years of working as a psychologist for Northern Light Acadia Hospital, Dr. Mundell discovered that she had been paid an hourly rate a little over *half* as much as her male counterparts. Dr. Mundell earned \$50 per hour, and the men in her department made \$90 and \$95 per hour, respectively. When Dr. Mundell reported this glaring pay disparity to management, instead of apologizing and taking immediate corrective action, they refused to admit that this major pay inequality was connected to her gender, and instead said they would pay the men more than her for another three months to “ease their transition.”

Unfortunately, Northern Light’s practice of paying female employees much less than their male colleagues is all too common. On average, women in the United States are paid only 82 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Mundell commented: “I am hopeful that this case will bring awareness to the widespread problem of gender-based pay disparities at Acadia Hospital, Northern Light Health, and across the state of Maine. And that it will encourage honest conversations among colleagues about what they are paid for their work.”

Attorney Wicks explained: “Secrecy around pay is one of the key reasons gender-based pay discrimination persists. The landmark pay discrimination case of Lilly Ledbetter arose only after she received an anonymous note that men with the same job title had been making thousands more than her for many years. For this very reason, Maine law gives employees the right to discuss their pay rates with each other; employers may not prohibit these important conversations among employees.”

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<sup>1</sup> This wage gap is even wider for women of color. For example, Black women are typically paid an average of 63 cents and Native American women 60 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men. See <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Wage-Gap-FAQ.pdf>

Attorney Garvan said: “Maine law has particularly strong equal pay protections for women. Men and women who perform comparable work must be paid equally for that work; employers may not discriminate on the basis of sex when they set pay rates.”

Attorneys Valerie Z. Wicks and Carol J. Garvan of the law firm Johnson, Webbert & Garvan, LLP, represent Dr. Mundell in this lawsuit. Johnson, Webbert & Garvan, LLP, has offices in Portland and Augusta and is the leading workers’ and civil rights law firm in Northern New England.