

FOR RELEASE:

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Renewed call for representation after women lose C-suite seats for the first time

OLYMPIA, WA -- Women make up half of the workforce in the United States. However, looking at the gender-diversity of C-suites for publicly traded companies, you would guess that number is closer to one tenth. In fact, [national trends](#) in 2023 indicate equal representation may be farther off than previously thought. For the first time in almost two decades, women lost seats in the C-suite.

Since S&P began collecting this data in 2005, gender diversity in C-suites and company leadership had consistently increased—until now. [Research](#) shows companies with gender-diverse executive teams are more likely to outperform companies with few or no women in executive leadership. So why has progress stagnated?

The Washington State Women's Commission will examine this and other questions during our upcoming event in Spokane. The first stop on the [Activate 3.8](#) Pay Equity Tour features a fireside chat with two women currently leading in Washington C-suites:

Cheryl Steele, CSO, Starbucks

Kelly Fukai, COO, Washington Technology Industry Association (WTIA)

Increasing representation in executive leadership is one prong of WSWC's [Activate 3.8](#) campaign aimed at testing and scaling solutions to close the wage gap for good. Activate 3.8 brings together thought leaders from government, business, and labor to co-create policy solutions, while concurrently introducing the next generation of girls to opportunities in STEM careers, the trades, and other high-paying occupations on a 10-city tour.

Activate 3.8 launches in Eastern Washington on [Saturday, July 27th](#) on the Gonzaga University Campus with the help of Gonzaga University's School of Leadership Studies, and their Women Lead program. This marks the first stop in our ten-city Pay Equity Tour in partnership with the

Girl Scouts of Eastern & Western Washington, [following the launch event with Governor Inslee in Seattle last month.](#)

Interview availability

Washington State Women's Commission Executive Director [Grace Yoo](#), Gov. Jay Inslee's lead cabinet director on women's policy, is available for virtual or in-studio interviews to speak on:

- Washington State Women's Commission's analysis of driving factors behind the gap
- WSWC's Activate 3.8 campaign to close Washington's staggering gender pay gap

Reach out to eliza.craig@swc.wa.gov to coordinate.

Starbucks Chief Security Officer Cheryl Steele is available for virtual or in-studio interviews to speak on:

- Women in the C-suite
 - o Navigating executive leadership in male-dominated fields

Reach out to eliza.craig@swc.wa.gov to coordinate.

ABOUT WOMEN LEAD PROGRAM:

The Women Lead program at Gonzaga University's School of Leadership Studies exists to educate and empower women. We offer a variety of programs that invite all genders to consider gender equity in the workplace, including conferences, workshops, book clubs, and even a certificate program. Since 2016, the program has educated thousands of working professionals from all industries and educational levels. While the programs offer education and empowerment, the space for building community and expanding one's network is most mentioned as the top reason for attending these events.

ABOUT THE WASHINGTON STATE WOMEN'S COMMISSION

The Washington State Women's Commission (WSWC) is an executive branch cabinet agency in the Office of Governor Inslee serving as the primary voice in government for Washington women and girls. Signed into law in 2018, WSWC develops policies and initiatives to address critical issues that disproportionately affect women, including childcare access and affordability, domestic and gender-based violence, equal pay, health care access, and intersectional inequities. Through strategic listening and collaboration, we represent the 3.8 million women and girls across the state.

Learn more at swc.wa.gov and activate38.com.