

Dear Chair Prozanski and Senate Judiciary Committee,

For the record, my name is [REDACTED] I am a student and I have recently moved back to Oregon after living in the Seattle area for more than 20 years. I am writing to ask you to support SB292.

For four and a half years, I survived an unhealthy workplace environment while employed at an in-house print shop for a large metropolitan health insurer. Initially, I worked as a night shift bindery operator, and my shift lead would harass and make inappropriate comments to myself and the other female employee. I reported these events, and was encouraged to file a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). My case eventually failed because I was not part of a protected class, and I had not been overt enough with my perpetrator to let him know that his behavior was offensive. Specifically, I was told that if I was harassed again, I was to stand still, yell "Stop!" with my arm raised straight out and palm up in a halting position, in order to convey that the behavior or statements were inappropriate. Needless to say, at twenty-four and working at night and without the benefit of additional management or security onsite, I was too shaken and afraid to follow through with this. Fortunately, my supervisor removed him from management, and transferred to the day shift to work as an offset press operator.

My work life briefly stabilized until over time, I had received enough promotions to make me the shift manager during the day. This placed me in a management position over my former perpetrator, and is when my trouble began again, only this time my life was in danger. Several months into the job, I was being considered for my third promotion, supervisor of the entire printing and mailing department, and I began to fall ill daily for an unknown reason. Eager to make a good showing at work, I said nothing and pressed on with my duties. It was not until two weeks later, on a long weekend get-away with my husband, that I began to feel better than I had in weeks. Believing that the cause of my illness was the water bottle I used at my desk, I returned on Monday with my new souvenir bottle. Within two days, I became very ill and noticed that the water in my bottle was cloudy and smelled like gasoline. The resultant

police investigation and emergency room visit determined that a petroleum-based solvent used to clean the rollers of an offset press.

This traumatic experience brought homicide detectives into my and my family's life, not only to try to prove who had done this, but to prove that I had not done this to myself in order to defame my perpetrator. The homicide detective handling my case told me that my EEOC claim was not just proof of a history of violation, but could also be viewed as a determining factor that I may have held a grudge against him told me. For weeks, I was interviewed and re-interviewed about the events, at various times of the day – both during work hours and at my home during weekends and evenings. I was required to submit to a polygraph test, and I had to answer questions about my childhood and personal life – all outside of the scope of the poisoning. I missed work and had multiple sessions with a psychologist, as I developed both a fear of leaving the safety of my home, and of consuming liquids that were not in sealed containers. During this time, I also was treated for dehydration at a local urgent care facility. Eventually, I returned to work, and my perpetrator was transferred to the shipping and receiving department. However, the strain of all of this was too great and after a few months, I decided to leave the company and return to school.

For me, the long-term effects of these events has been far reaching. My marriage failed within the year, due in part from the trauma of this experience, and I struggled to feel safe wherever I went. I felt safer, when six months after my resignation, my perpetrator was incarcerated for more than a decade in Special Populations at McNeil Island Penitentiary, on both multiple federal and state charges unrelated to my experiences with him. Years later, through my own research, I learned that he had been released from prison. I was horrified to discover that I had recently moved to the same tiny rural town where he resided. When I realized that we lived just ten blocks from each other in a town that had only one grocery store, I moved in the middle of the night. Since then, I only used mail box stores as my mailing address, kept no utility bills in my name, and used a different name on social media. Additionally, I was unable to vote during this period because I was unwilling to file for a restraining order, which would

reveal my home and work addresses, so I was unable to participate in the Address Confidentiality Program.

My hope is to begin a new life in Oregon. Here, hundreds of miles away from him, I feel safe to walk through the city, make personal and professional connections, and even register to vote! This morning I learned that I have successfully completed my final class for my undergraduate degree. It has taken me thirty years, one month, and twenty-six days to finish my bachelor's degree in social work, and it has taken this long, in part, due to the trauma I experienced in the workplace. I am excited to use my education to help others, and I ask that you would support SB292 to create a safer work environment for all of us in Oregon.

Sincerely,

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