



**FAMILY FORWARD**  
**OREGON**

*Smart policies for today's families.*

January 24, 2019

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 479**

Requires public employers to adopt policies to prevent workplace harassment

Submitted by Courtney Helstein on behalf of Family Forward Oregon

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 479. Family Forward Oregon is committed to advancing policies that support women and families and help them succeed, including policies that help protect employees from sexual harassment in the workplace. The legislature has a critical role to play in pursuing policies that can make a difference for all workers—including our public employees.

A key aspect of combating sexual harassment is helping reform and transform workplace cultures. Everyone should be safe from harassment at work, regardless of what or whether they are paid or because of their race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, age or disability.

SB 479 works to move the needle closer to harassment free workplaces through:

- **Transparency:** Requiring public employers to provide new hires with basic information about: their sexual harassment policy, internal mechanisms for reporting complaints, and available legal protections that cover employees, interns, contractors, elected officials and volunteers.
- **Protection:** No public employee can be retaliated against for speaking up about experiencing or witnessing sexual harassment in their workplace, and no public funds can be paid to any person in exchange for the person's silence or inaction related to an allegation or investigation of workplace harassment.
- **Accountability:** SB 479 requires the employer to proactively check back in with employees about whether harassment has ended or the person has experienced retaliation. This appropriately puts the responsibility for monitoring workplace conduct and climate on the employer rather than the employee.

Public employers are not just workplaces, but places of public accommodation that involve interactions between Oregonians using public services, and with elected and appointed officials and employees. These should be model workplaces that are safe and accessible for all people in our state. **We urge your support for Senate Bill 497.**