



February 5, 2019

Co-Chairs Senator Ginny Burdick, Senate Majority Leader, and Representative Jennifer Williamson, House Democratic Leader; Co-Vice Chairs Senator Tim Knopp and Representative Carl Wilson, House Republican Leader; and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) of OR, we respectfully request your support for House Bill 2859.

As we are all aware, the Oregon Law Commission undertook an extensive and serious examination regarding how the Legislature might develop policies and procedures to ensure that the Capitol is a safe environment in which to work, advocate and legislate. As a result of this endeavor, the OLC recommended that a confidential reporting mechanism should be available, whereby reporters of workplace harassment should be able to decide whether their experiences become public.

As we know, sexual harassment is often associated with feelings of shame and guilt, and a fear of negative consequences if a report is made. It is also the case that when an individual is suffering harassment in the workplace, a colleague may likely be experiencing the same misconduct.

We believe that provision of a confidential reporting mechanism as proposed in HB 2859 is critical to ensuring that reports of sexual and other harassment will actually be made. This concern is particularly salient in the political, often partisan, environment that intrinsically affects the legislative process.

This legislation is also to be commended for extending the opportunity for privileged communications to those who wish to consult with the Principal Outreach Officer of the Legislative Equity Office about harassment. It represents a significant adjunct to a confidential reporting process.

By providing an avenue for redress, this legislation makes clear that harassment will not be tolerated in the Capitol. Not only does it speak from a substantive standpoint, but swiftly passing HB 2859 will underscore the importance that legislative leadership places on this issue.

Trish Garner
State Public Policy Chair, AAUW of OR
Member, National AAUW Public Policy Committee
503-407-2341
garner37@mac.com