

## WFA: The Workplace Fairness Act Written Testimony Template

Date: February 11, 2019

To: Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Knopp, Members of the Senate Committee on Workforce

From: Anonymous Victim 8

RE: Anonymous Victim 8 Support for SB 726, The Oregon Workplace Fairness Act

Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Knopp and members of the Senate Workforce Committee:

I support SB 726 which would better protect workers that have faced discrimination in the workplace. I know that current laws don't go far enough to protect harassment victims at work and I support SB 726.

I worked at one of the biggest law firms in Portland. There was no HR department during the 3 years I was an employee (I've heard that they might have hired someone within the last 6 months). The person we were supposed to go to with problems was the executive director who was already extremely busy and didn't have the time or energy to properly deal with interpersonal or harassment issues. It also felt like, because of the history of the firm, the number of employees, and the lack of communication in other incidents, there wasn't really a safe space to be heard and believed.

At one point at the end of 2017, the executive director was told that I had had some issues with a man in the accounting department and asked me to tell her my story. She also asked if anyone else I know had had any issues (at the time, I didn't). I don't remember when the first incident happened but I was sitting on a couch in the office, reading a book during my lunch break. He came and sat right next to me. I was immediately uncomfortable with how close he was (leg to leg). He then put his arm around me and I got even more tense. He noticed and said "am I making you uncomfortable?" and I replied with "yes." He got up and left me alone. Another time, again, I was sitting alone reading a book in the office kitchen. I had my back to the room. He came up to me and got extremely close to me to ask me something innocuous. I pulled my head and body away from him and commented on how close he was to me. I told this to the executive director and she said, especially after the MeToo movement, how seriously they were taking these things.

In late December 2017, he yelled at me because I didn't properly thank him for holding a door open for me. In fact, him holding the door open made everything less streamlined and awkward for everyone. I commented on this jokingly and he lost it. I decided to keep more detailed notes of the incidents from then on. At the end of January 2018, I witnessed him corner a FedEx delivery person (female) in the elevator. He asked her if he could carry the box for her. She declined. He kept asking and getting closer to her. She continued to decline while pushing herself further and further into the corner of the elevator. I was one of at least 3 witnesses who all felt extremely uncomfortable by this interaction. I debated saying something but, knowing how he had reacted to me a month prior, I decided to just wait for it to end.

After that incident, I asked the executive director what was happening about him since I hadn't

heard any updates since I talked to her at the end of the year. She seemed upset that I would ask; as if it was none of my business. But she told me they had asked him to take some sort of class. When I told her about the elevator incident, she seemed disappointed or upset (not with me). There was another incident in February 2018 where I didn't say "good morning" to him because I was in the middle of a conversation with someone else and he yelled at me and her. Despite the fact that I smiled at him to acknowledge him and she did say "good morning" but it was too quiet for him to hear. The childishness and pettiness were astonishing.

I started to hear more and more stories from another coworker about him. I can't tell her story for her but they were, in my opinion, much worse and less easy to brush off as misunderstandings. According to what she told me, he would say very explicit sexual things to her. According to my notes, one of the stories she told me was: "I spilled water on my skirt and he asked me if I peed my pants. I jokingly responded 'yes' as I was walking away and he replied with 'well the next time you pee on yourself, come get me so I can watch.'" She didn't feel comfortable telling the executive director because she feared there would be more consequences than benefits. We both felt like this guy was never going to get fired because he brought money in for the firm. It didn't feel like the firm wanted to actually do something about this but wanted to look like they had.

Both she and I no longer work there and, as far as I know, he still does. On my last day at this firm, he tried to hug me without asking. I had to physically push him away from me. He came up to me later and I told him its always a good rule of thumb to ask someone before you try to push your body against their body. He told me he had learned something today in that he should ask before touching. I highly doubt he has learned anything.

Workplace harassment affected every aspect of my life because I was relying on this job to support myself. When you have to go to work and face abuse, it takes away the dignity and respect that we all have the right to feel in the workplace but also takes away the dignity in supporting yourself. I simply wanted to go to work and not face harassment, so that I could put food on the table and live my life without fear.

I respectfully request the committee support SB 726 and commends Sen. Taylor and the committee for giving this legislation due consideration in service to your constituencies and Oregonians from across the state. Furthermore, I commend Vice Chair Knopp for his leadership on this issue. This bill is critical to the workplace safety of all Oregonians.