

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 4

RE: Anonymous Victim 4 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. I support SB 726 because I have faced harassment in the workplace and when I told my employer, the harassment continued.

I had two men hold me upside down and give me a "birthday spanking". They had my arms pinned against my side and my head was pointed toward the concrete floor. With two of them involved, I had no chance of getting away from them. I was completely helpless. They beat me so hard that I couldn't sit down for three days.

When I reported the harassment to my employer I was forced to sit down with these two men that had assaulted me and "work out our differences". This was as traumatizing as the original assault. The harassment didn't stop.

I was shunned, physically and verbally abused by the other men at my workplace and the sexual harassment continued. I experienced sexual harassment at my employment place all 29 years of my career. I later filed a BOLI complaint (what a joke, the employer just stonewalled BOLI and refused to cooperate in the investigation). I then hired a lawyer and proceeded to file a right to sue letter so that I could subpoena records not available to BOLI. At this point the employer suddenly wanted to settle with me. They did. I received very little compensation for the years of abuse that I endured. I left my job before retirement age and forfeited my benefits, when I could no longer physically or mentally put up with the hostile work environment. I have been diagnosed with PTSD as a result of my employment experiences. Since leaving my job I have not been able to seek other employment due to my PTSD symptoms.

Ironically, my employer regularly put on a Diversity Conference for the community so other employers could learn from their example. Their HR department was well aware of the horrible working environment that the non-traditional women in their employ experienced. They had conducted a survey of their women employees working in non-traditional jobs several years before I quit and they buried the results (this is what they were afraid I would subpoena in my upcoming lawsuit). They had never indentured a female apprentice until after 2006, despite having their program overseen by the State of Oregon. The current laws did not force them to improve their workplace and make it safe for women to work there.

I am but one example of the suffering experienced by women at this employers work places. The State of Oregon needs to do more to protect women in the workplace.

Workplace harassment affected every aspect of my life because I was relying on this job to support myself and my family. 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.