

WFA: The Workplace Fairness Act Written Testimony Template

Date: May 8, 2019

To: Chair Williamson, Vice-Chair Gorsek, Vice-Chair Sprenger, Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

From: Anonymous Victim 11

RE: Anonymous Victim 11 Support for SB 726A, The Oregon Workplace Fairness Act

Chair Williamson, Vice-Chair Gorsek, Vice-Chair Sprenger and Members of the House Rules Committee:

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

I was representing women in sexual harassment lawsuits as a lawyer, while I was being sexually harassed by one of my supervisors. He would rub my shoulders, lean his body against mine, make comments like "you are sweet like chocolate, but the chocolate tastes sweet and I don't know how you . . ." and "you are more important than my wife right now" in the context of choosing to work late (we did not have a friendship or any type of relationship that would have justified this comment). I went to another employment lawyer who told me "things are really sexist, and you just have to deal with it" and implied that I was not pretty enough to actually be experiencing harassment. After more than a year of this type of experience, I found tools that worked through life coaching certification, and I effectively stopped the harassment. The harasser apologized, stopped touching me, and we worked together safely for years after. This was a very empowering experience in my career, and now I teach employees how to do the same.

Later, with the same employer, I raised issues regarding sexism related to pay after a different supervisor made threats about my pay because he believed I had called him out as sexist to colleagues. The employer conducted an internal investigation that made co-workers feel threatened, intimidated, fearful for their jobs, and hostile towards me for raising the issue. I did not want an investigation in the first place, but this one appeared particularly ineffective and potentially biased.

I support these changes because I believe the law, as it is now, encourages employers to create cover-ups and invest in ignoring harassment and discrimination rather than investing in working towards real change and healthy workplace cultures.

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 commend the committee for giving this legislation due consideration in service to your constituencies and Oregonians from across the state.