



Oregon Tradeswomen

Representative Janelle Bynum, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
900 Court Street NE, HR F
Salem, OR 97301

May 3, 2021

Dear Chair Bynum and Members of the Committee:

Oregon Tradeswomen is a nonprofit headquartered in Portland, and while we focus on providing apprenticeship-readiness training for women, we also advocate for respectful jobsite culture in the construction industry, providing training, support, and leadership development. We do these things because the construction industry, while providing excellent careers pathways, family-supporting wages, and benefits, such as healthcare and a pension, also has a long and shameful history of harassment, hazing, bullying, and discrimination. This unacceptable behavior is most often directed at women and people of color, and for far too long the culture of hate has been permitted to continue through inaction.

In 2020, a graduate of Oregon Tradeswomen's apprenticeship-readiness program called to tell us that a noose had been found hanging on her jobsite. As a new apprentice, a woman, and a person of color, she had very little authority, if any, to generate a response to this incident. Regardless, she did everything she could to have it addressed by those in positions of power whose job it was to handle such matters in an appropriate and expedient manner.

She informed her immediate supervisor, and no action was taken.

She then took it to the general contractor's supervisor, and again, incredibly, no action was taken. Finally, with few options left, she took the matter up with her union.

Unfortunately, with so much time having transpired between the time she found the noose, and anyone deciding to investigate, the perpetrator had ample opportunity to cover their tracks or even leave the jobsite. Further, both she, and others on site, had to experience the trauma of having to show up to work, day after day, where what basically amounts to a death threat, was repeatedly disregarded by the very bodies that are meant to provide a safe and healthful environment for their workforce. Not only did this explicitly violate OSHA's General Duty Clause, but the message sent to minority tradesworkers is unacceptable. It is no wonder that women and people of color exit the industry at far higher rates than white men.

Oregon Tradeswomen has been a vocal and constant advocate, along with many other industry stakeholders, for speaking up against hate on our jobsites, and actively working to change toxic jobsite culture. Through our participation in the Safe from Hate Alliance, the Metropolitan Alliance for

Workforce Equity (MAWE), and in implementing a jobsite culture program called RISE Up (Respect, Inclusion, Safety and Equity), Oregon Tradeswomen is calling for action towards change.

Our guiding voice for jobsite culture change is the Tradesworker Equity Council. It is comprised of a diverse group of committed tradesworkers who, with the support of Oregon Tradeswomen, are working as part of the Safe from Hate Alliance Steering Committee. The tradesworker who found the noose on their jobsite is a member of this council. She, along with the other Council members stand up, speak out and take action each day to advocate for safe, respectful jobsites, free from hate, harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.

We hope that you hear their plea for change and urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to do the same by taking action and passing SB 398 to ban the display of a noose with the intent to intimidate or harass another person or group of people and establish legal ramifications for individuals who commit these heinous acts.

With gratitude,

Kelly M. Kupcak

Kelly Kupcak, Executive Director