



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

May 4, 2021

From: Metropolitan Alliance for Workforce Equity (MAWE)

Dear Chair Bynum and Members of the Committee,

We are the Metropolitan Alliance for Workforce Equity (MAWE), a historic partnership between the Building and Construction Trades unions and the Pacific NW Regional Council of Carpenters, diverse construction contractors, pre-apprenticeship programs, and community-based organizations. MAWE works to promote economic opportunity and equity in workforce and contracting and develop practical strategies to address historic inequities in the region. These partners developed Portland's first Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) to create a framework for shared community oversight and accountability, fair labor standards, and goals and resources to increase contracting and workforce opportunities for historically underserved community members.

The goals of MAWE are to:

- Support the creation of good quality construction jobs and contracting opportunities in the Portland Metro area.
- Specifically connect these jobs and opportunities to historically underrepresented populations, especially people of color and women.
- Sustain and grow the training and community infrastructure with resources in order to address the regional need for a trained, qualified, and diverse construction workforce and contractor pool.
- Work with partners, contractors and public owners to replicate best practices on construction projects and systematize those practices region-wide in order to accomplish workforce and contracting equity.

We represent over 200,000 constituents and their families in our collective power.

Addressing hostile and unsafe worksites has long been a priority for MAWE. We understand, on many levels, that when a worker is treated with hostility, bullying, racism and sexism, or outright neglect on the jobsite, everyone suffers.

Workers subjected to such treatment and worksite leaders are not sufficiently trained or prepared to communicate and intervene to the degree necessary to ensure a safe and efficient jobsite and particularly, to

protect the worker. Furthermore, jobsites with a culture of harassment suffer from poor morale, safety issues and lack of productivity. The industry stands to lose good talent due to that individual leaving the industry for good. Most importantly, when the worker is a woman or person of color, these hostile actions are a clear reflection of how deeply sexist and racist the Construction industry still is. The typical solution for decades has been to move the perpetrator to another jobsite without any measure of accountability or change in behavior. Without any consequence, these incidences have no sign of decreasing and continue to have deep and detrimental impact on the industry and on the community.

Last year, MAWE learned from our labor and community partners that on May 20, 2020, a noose was hung on the PSU/OHSU/PCC/City of Portland project in downtown Portland, Oregon. Upon finding the symbol of racism, hatred and a clear threat of violence, a female apprentice of color immediately reported to her company foreman, at TCM Corp, a subcontractor to Andersen. The foreman responded that it was “probably a joke” and did nothing further. The apprentice then went to an Andersen foreman, who indicated he would address it at a foreman’s meeting, but then later indicated to the apprentice he had “forgotten about it”. The apprentice took it upon herself to remove the noose when those in charge took no action. Neither of these responses by foremen was acceptable. Nor is the lack of action and outrage since the incident occurred. We can no longer stand by and excuse such behaviors in this way, for if we do, we are complicit.

The values of the labor movement and community and industry partners must lead us to not only speak out, but also to stand for justice. We, as stakeholders in the industry and in our region, recognize that we must take this moment to work together to put an end to systemic racism and sexism and create workplaces which allow all workers to have dignity, feel safe, and do their jobs without fear or harm.

MAWE strongly supports SB 398 to ban the display of a noose and urges the Legislature to pass this bill to address these egregious acts of hate in our region and across the state. SB 398 opens the door for legal remedies against individuals who commit a hate crime by using the noose with the intent to intimidate or harass another person or group of people.

Regards,

MAWE Partners

- Bricklayers Local 1
- Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council
- Constructing Hope Pre-Apprenticeship Program
- Division Midway Alliance
- Healthy Communities Coalition PDX
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48
- Laborers International Union Local 737
- National Taskforce on Tradeswomen’s Issues
- O’Neill Electric Inc.
- Operating Engineers Local 701
- Oregon Tradeswomen
- Pacific NW Regional Council of Carpenters
- Painters and Allied Trades International Union District Council 5
- Portland Harbor Community Coalition
- Portland Jobs with Justice

Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center
Portland YouthBuilders
Professional Business Development Group
Rose Community Development
The Main Street Alliance of Oregon
The Rosewood Initiative
Urban League of Portland
Verde
Worksystems