

TRAVIS NELSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 44
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 851

March 14, 2023

Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Bonham, and members of the committee,

I am Travis Nelson, State Representative for House District 44 (North and Northeast Portland). I am a Registered Nurse and the first openly LGBTQ+ Black legislator in the 164-year history of our great state. Committee members, I am here today in support of Senate Bill 851. This bill is critical for the protection of Oregonians from psychological and emotional harassment, bullying, and abuse in the workplace.

We can all agree that no one should be abused in their line of work, especially by colleagues or managers. Not only does it create an unsafe work environment, but it also creates lasting psychological and physiological trauma that impacts the employee's work, health, and personal life. Workplace harassment and abuse can lead to the loss of a beloved job, a serious change to a person's mental health and emotional responses, and detriments large and small felt in a thousand other ways. SB 851 would help protect our workers by strengthening laws about harassment in the workplace. We all deserve to feel safe in our offices, our jobs, and our workplace connections, and this bill would help reinforce the protections necessary to that.

In my two decades as a Registered Nurse and union representative, I have seen nearly every conceivable type of workplace abuse and bullying. You name it, I've witnessed it. And experienced some of it as well. I cannot begin to emphasize how different things would have progressed for myself and others if there had been stronger laws about such conduct. In addition to creating trauma and psychological harm for an employee, the current process of documenting and reporting workplace bullying is faulty and time-consuming. This takes away precious time and energy from critical work in all professions. We can't afford to lose valuable workers and work hours due to bad actors and a system that resembles a quagmire more than a functioning human resources system. Our workers, our companies, and our state's economy will all benefit by the passage of this bill.

The -1 amendment replaces SB 851 with language reflected in my proposed House Bill 3316 on this issue. I am looking forward to signing on as a sponsor when this bill comes to the House. I am fully supportive of this amendment and the protections this bill entails.

I urge you to pass this bill out of committee.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Travis Nelson'.

State Representative Travis Nelson
House District 44, North/NE Portland