

## 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 5

RE: Anonymous Victim 5 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 didn't report within a year because I was afraid.

As a 19-year-old waitress, I was sexually harassed by the 30-something-year-old Chef. Beyond inappropriate comments he would make towards me, one time, he squeezed my butt when we were alone in the walk-in refrigerator. I remember him asking me out on a date. I remember feeling very nervous and turning him down, but I honestly don't remember what I said or how he responded. I didn't consider saying anything to him or management. It didn't even cross my mind that a corporate restaurant chain would be equipped with how to handle my complaints. This was one of my first jobs after all. But I instinctively knew without question that speaking up would make my job and life harder. So, I kept my head down. From two other male co-workers that summer, I was given inappropriate gifts and hit on while I was working.

Fast forward a couple of years, working at a different restaurant, and I witnessed repeated sexual harassment. The restaurant owner would come in about twice a month and hit on my friend, a waitress. He would rub the back of her neck and touch her waist, saying inappropriate things. She complained to the manager and he said there wasn't anything he could do because it was the owner. A few months later, the middle-aged manager started confessing his love for a 20-year-old waitress, and calling her at all hours of the night. As I witnessed this, I told myself that I was right to keep my mouth closed. That sexual harassment in the workplace was normal. This is what working was like. Later, that was confirmed by another manager telling me that I needed to wear less clothing when I was serving tables. He chastised me for wearing a cardigan and demanded that I remove it immediately, and wear a shorter skirt in the future.

Years later, it took me months to trust my male supervisor. At 31 years old now, I recognize that these experiences shaped the way I navigate the workplace, tiptoeing and bristling around male colleagues who show the slightest signs of flirtation. Only now, do I realize that the behavior I witnessed may have been normalized, but it didn't have to be. Thinking back on it, I'm not sure I would have complained to my manager. I was probably right, they wouldn't have known how to handle it, and I would have made my job and life hell. The bottom line was that this older man, the Chef, scared me, and standing up to him wasn't worth the risk. I consider myself so lucky that things didn't escalate, and that I never went through something worse like so many women do. Had there been more

comprehensive rights for victims, had there been laws in place that protected employees who had been discriminated against, maybe I would have felt protected enough to complain. Maybe, the laws would have actually influenced the culture, or at least scared off the Chef. Maybe, none of this would have happened to me or my friends. Please do not delay in preventing more sexual harassment and protecting people who have been harassed and survivors.

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.