



*Standing for dignity in the workplace*

*Testimony in Support of SB 1586*

February 8, 2022

Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Knopp, and Members of the Senate Labor and Business Committee,

I write in strong support of SB 1586. This bill will clean up some of the unintended consequences of the ground-breaking work this body did in 2019 when it passed the Workplace Fairness Act, (“the Act.”)

The Northwest Workers' Justice Project provides legal representation to low-wage workers throughout the economy in sectors such as construction, building maintenance, landscaping, hotels, restaurants, food processing, agriculture and forestry. All of our clients are low-wage earners. The large majority of our clients are people of color, and most are immigrants. Many have been victims of workplace harassment and discrimination.

Since the passage of the Workplace Fairness Act, we as attorneys have seen a disturbing practice that some employers engage in to get around the intent of the law. Some employers ask the victim to request a non-disclosure agreement, and refuse to settle a claim without one. The effect of this is to nullify the Legislature’s intention of making NDAs available *only* when workers want them for their own personal reasons.

We have also seen instances where workers who speak languages other than English are left out of important notices regarding their rights under the Act. SB 1586 clarifies that an employee must be notified of their rights under the Act in the language in which they regularly communicate with their employer. This ensures that worksites with workers who speak languages other than English are actually communicating this important information to workers. These workers need information on the protections of the Act as much as if not more than other workers.

Thank you for your consideration. Kate Suisman, Attorney at NWJP