

Wednesday, February 23, 2023

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RE: Testimony in support of SB 851

Successful relationships are the cornerstone of business, schools, and a healthy, productive society. However, workers psychological abuse horror stories from across the nation are broadcast regularly:

- From 2000 – 2018 the youth suicide rate rose 57%. From 1999-2016, all suicide rates in general increased by 30% across all ages and ethnic groups.
- Toxic cultures are associated with disengagement and quick quitting which costs organizations approximately \$200,000 per skilled worker.
- Health promoting behaviors and resiliency are diminished in the face of ongoing hostility which compounds historical and current impacts of systemic discrimination.
- Adverse childhood experiences increase chronic disease risk and poor health outcomes, overall.

Meanwhile potential solutions are discouraged, or movements toward psychologically safe work environments are stonewalled in the face of victim blaming rhetoric. I'm advocating that we give psychological safety and psychological trauma the importance it deserves — let's not invalidate workers' experiences either. Trauma is not the same as "being mad" or "being upset." It's also not for lay people to define or pick and choose who they need to accommodate. There are several definitions of trauma and psychological safety out there – for brevity – readers might want to look at Dr Amy Edmonson's definition of psychological safety. As for psychological trauma, it does involve a feeling of being trapped and unrelenting pain/misery. Understanding these terms in very real, concrete ways is important if we are ever to reach the point where preventive measures could be imposed.

Legislation such as SB 851 can be a protective factor in the lives of Oregon workers, their supervisors, and top leadership. When everyone understands the interconnectedness of our communities and how they might just play a role in enabling abusive behaviors and the consequences for it, the model is flipped, and kind leadership becomes the standard. Kind leadership is not for wimps or sell-outs; it is a powerful tool in the face of systems of oppression, limiting thoughts, behaviors, and actions many people are still in denial of and perpetuating.

I was one of the lucky ones to survive workplace abuse and retaliation. Other workers with children and extended families to support have not fared so well and that is why I am testifying. Oregon's economy, communities, children and families deserve for their loved ones to feel respected, appreciated for their unique talents and gifts, and offered meaningful support to stay productive at work. Thank you for your support!