

February 27, 2025

Subject: Support for SB180 – Relating to Retaliatory Actions for Defamation

Dear Chair Prozanski, & Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing as a representative of the Oregon National Organization for Women (known as NOW) Legislative Task Force to express our strong support for Senate Bill 180, which addresses retaliatory actions for defamation in cases involving accusations of sexual assault, harassment, or discrimination. This bill is crucial in ensuring that individuals who come forward with such serious allegations, without malice, are not subjected to retaliatory defamation lawsuits by the accused.

SB180 is an important step in creating a safer and more just society for survivors of sexual violence, harassment, and discrimination. By preventing the misuse of defamation lawsuits, the bill empowers survivors to report their experiences without the fear of retribution from the accused. This is critical in supporting victims and fostering a culture where survivors are believed and treated with dignity.

Here are some key reasons for supporting SB180:

1. **Promoting Equality for Women in Legal Protections**

Sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination disproportionately affect women. **SB180 helps create a more equitable legal framework by ensuring that survivors are not punished or dismissed simply because the accused holds more power or resources.**¹ This bill is a necessary tool for advancing equality for women in the legal system and addressing systemic inequalities.

2. **Challenging the Abuse of Legal Tools to Silence Victims**

Historically, powerful individuals have used defamation lawsuits to intimidate and silence victims, particularly women. **SB180 ensures that defamation laws are not weaponized to further harm vulnerable individuals.**² This helps break the cycle of silence and ensures that survivors are not further victimized for seeking justice.

3. **Empowering Survivors and Creating a Safer Space for Reporting**

Feminists have long advocated for an environment where survivors feel safe to come forward. **SB180 ensures that individuals who report misconduct are not silenced by retaliatory defamation lawsuits.** This protection helps encourage more survivors to speak out against violence and discrimination, supporting the goals of social change and accountability.

¹ Medina, Ali. "How Defamation Is Used to Silence Survivors." Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review, 14 Mar. 2024, <https://journals.law.harvard.edu/crcl/how-defamation-is-used-to-silence-survivors/>

² "Weaponizing Defamation Lawsuits Against Survivors Violates International Human Rights." News and Insights, Equality Now, 29 Nov. 2021, https://equalitynow.org/news_and_insights/weaponizing-defamation-lawsuits-against-survivors-violates-international-human-rights/

By supporting SB180, you are protecting survivors and fostering a culture of belief and support. This bill helps ensure that accusations made in good faith are not undermined by frivolous lawsuits, allowing the legal system to remain fair and just for all individuals. It represents an important step toward ending violence and supporting those who seek justice.

We urge you to pass SB180 and stand with survivors in the fight for justice and equality.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Heather Bell
Oregon National Organization for Women, Legislative Task Force