

November 6, 2017

Stand With Us

Over the last few weeks, people from every walk of life have stepped forward and created a broad public dialogue about what we've always known in our own workplaces: inappropriate, sexually harassing behavior and assault are pervasive. And sexually harassing behavior, manipulation and coercion cut across all industries and professions.

As women serving and working in the legislative and political realm, we add our voices to the chorus of "enough." We stand together to change a culture that, until now, has too often functioned to serve and support harassers' power and privilege over protection of those who work with them.

At some point in our lives, every one of us has experienced, witnessed, and counseled others through unwanted advances or a range of dehumanizing behavior – from innuendo to groping, from inappropriate comments and jokes to unwanted touching and assault.

Our political world is one of explicit and implicit power differentials. We have no clear hierarchy like a more traditional workplace. We have no safe, neutral place to report our experiences. And there are currently few possibilities for meaningful consequences for inappropriate behavior. For some of us, speaking out about harassment means choosing between our personal safety and our professional futures or policy successes. We know that countless times, women have calculated the risk, remembered what happened to other women who spoke up and seen the lack of meaningful pathways for change. And too often, the safe choice has been to "deal with" these situations ourselves.

The state legislature *should* be leading the way. We say we have a zero-tolerance policy. That needs to be real. Today, we challenge the leadership and members of both chambers and both parties to lead the way in our state by working together with us to change the culture from one which silently supports and perpetuates harassment to one which supports and preserves safety. We must all make a tangible commitment to end sexual harassment in all its forms in Olympia. Let's make sure legislators, staff and lobbyists understand what sexual harassment is and how the inherent power disparities impact all of us. We need to make clear that we are all expected to intervene and stop harassment and coercive behavior. We must build a safe process for legislators, staff and lobbyists to report and relate our experiences, and create a range of meaningful consequences when lines are crossed.

Today, we stand together and commit: you can come to us if you are in a position of risk. We will help. We will work to protect you. And we will continue to call on leadership to create and use both structures and individual influence to change this culture.

Now is the time. Stand with us.

Sincerely,

Randi Abrams-Caras
Kelly Adams
Ella Andrews
Senator Jan Angel
Representative Sherry Appleton
Danni Askini
Senator Barbara Bailey
Jessica Bateman
Kelsey Beck
Senator Randi Becker
Rachel Berkson
Liz Berry
Simone Boe
Becky Bogard
Holly Bosch Chisa
Marcy Bowers
Brynn Brady
Christine Brewer
Senator Sharon Brown
Katy Buck
Carolyn Busch
Representative Michelle Caldier
Samantha Casne
Senator Maralyn Chase
Sarah Cherin
Donna Christensen
Janet Chung
Senator Annette Cleveland
Representative Judy Clibborn
Representative Eileen Cody
Pam Crone
Adair Dammann
Ellicott Dandy
Senator Jeannie Darneille
Olgy Diaz
Lynne Dodson
Representative Beth Doglio
Representative Laurie Dolan
Liz Elwart
Robin Engle
Stephanie Ervin
Ame Esterline
Jen Estroff
Sydney Forrester
Jessica Fortescue

Jessica Frahs
Representative Noel Frame
Peggen Frank
Katie Garrow
Naomi Goodman
Julia Gorton
Elissa Goss
Lindsey Grad
Samantha Grad
Nicole Grant
Lori Grassi
Representative Mia Gregerson
Alia Griffing
Joanna Grist
Erin Haick
Ryan Hall
Diane Hand McDaniel
Tiffany Hankins
Monisha Harrell
Kristina Hermach
Lauren Hipp
Rebecca Hodson Hellman
Renee Hopkins
Maggie Humphreys
Maha Jahshan
Shweta Jayawardhan
Sara Jaynes
Representative Laurie Jenkins
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Representative Ruth Kagi
Senator Karen Keiser
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Representative Christine Kilduff
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Lucinda Young
Lara Zarowsky
Jennifer Ziegler
Jerri Zimmerman Wood