

February 25, 2018

Democratic Party of Illinois
Michael J. Madigan,
Chairman

Dear Chairman Madigan,

During the last year, there has been a groundswell of energy, enthusiasm and resolve building behind the #MeToo movement. For too long, women across our nation and our state have been subjected to illegal and unacceptable behavior in the workplace from supervisors, coworkers and colleagues, and they have come together to say “No more!”

Sexual harassment and inequality have damaged the lives and undermined the careers of countless women in every profession. All of us share in the responsibility to address this long-standing and pervasive ill that exists in our culture that has spanned generations.

As elected officials in the Democratic Party, we have an obligation to lead and to make sure that all Americans -- female or male -- have the opportunity to put in a hard day’s work for a hard day’s pay in an environment free from sexual harassment.

It is in this spirit that we have accepted your request to convene a panel that will examine how Illinois Democrats can better protect campaign staffers, candidates, government employees and political consultants from sexual harassment.

We are approaching this challenge with open minds and a commitment to providing real solutions based on input from human resources experts, legal experts and survivors to develop a comprehensive set of recommendations.

After discussing the scope of this project, we have determined that, for the sake of maintaining the integrity of our work, this panel must be completely independent from any oversight beyond the three of us as equal co-chairs. While we expect the full cooperation of the Democratic Party of Illinois in working to implement our recommendations, we believe that achieving the level of independence we are committed to requires us to fund this effort ourselves. To that end, we will establish an independent funding mechanism to pay for the staff, research, legal and human resources expertise necessary to develop an effective and fact-based set of recommendations. We will hire our own staff without input from the Democratic Party of Illinois.

Our goal is to provide a set of forward-facing guidelines to be adopted by all Democratic officeholders, campaigns and nonprofit organizations to eliminate institutional protections for abusers and provide resources to help survivors continue in their careers. Additionally, we will examine the barriers that have held back women from holding higher leadership in our Party. Because we know that, as Democrats, our strength has always come from our diversity.

It is not the role of this panel to conduct an investigation into any specific instances of alleged sexual harassment. However, we plan to speak with those who have bravely stood up and shared their stories to get a firsthand understanding of what they went through. That way, moving forward, we can do a better job of protecting hard-working women in our Party.

We appreciate this unique opportunity to serve as panel members and look forward to starting our important work.



Comptroller Susana A. Mendoza



Congresswoman Cheri Bustos



Rep. Carol Ammons