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Workplace Fairness Act Passes Oregon House *Legislation seeks to protect Oregonians from workplace harassment*

SALEM – The Workplace Fairness Act unanimously passed the Oregon House of Representatives today.

The legislation, [Senate Bill 726](#), seeks to protect Oregonians from workplace discrimination and harassment through a number of provisions that level the playing field between workers and employers. The legislation:

- Extends the statute of limitations for both BOLI complaints and civil actions to five years, from the date the incident took place;
- States that when an employer has made a good faith determination that the act of discrimination or harassment took place and was committed by someone with the authority to hire and fire employees that the employer may void any contractual severance that was previously agreed to;
- Disallows nondisclosure agreements for prospective employees, or applicants, related specifically to disclosing discrimination, harassment or sexual assault.
- States that an employer may not request a non-disclosure or no-rehire agreement when an aggrieved worker faces discrimination or harassment

“Survivors of harassment often find that they do not know who they can report to, and if they report, they are often discredited or their harasser faces little to no consequences,” said co-chief sponsor Rep. Andrea Salinas (D-Lake Oswego). “Fortunately, the MeToo movement brought the issue of workplace harassment to light. More and more workers are coming forward to denounce the harassment they receive at work. This legislation is an important step in improving things for working Oregonians.”

This legislation would also require the Bureau of Labor and Industries to develop model policies and procedures for both employees and employers around workplace sexual harassment.

Statistics around workplace harassment demonstrate why this legislation is so important. At least one in four women have experienced sexual harassment and 75 percent of women experience retaliation when they reported it. Further, as many as 94 percent of employees experiencing harassment do not file a formal complaint and out of the 28,000 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaints that were filed, 45 percent were sexual.

“As we work hard to improve the broader culture for everyone, I believe this legislation is a great step forward for every working Oregonian,” said chief sponsor Rep. Jennifer Williamson (D-

Portland). “This policy will improve the lives of working people across the state, especially, women and women of color.”

Sen. Kathleen Taylor (D-Portland), Sen. Tim Knopp (R-Bend), and Sen. Sara Gelser (D-Corvallis) were co-chief sponsors of the bill. A bipartisan, bicameral group of 26 legislators signed on as sponsors.

The bill now goes to Gov. Kate Brown.

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