



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature
State Capitol
Salem, OR

NEWS RELEASE

April 22, 2019

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Senate supports bipartisan bill to protect survivors of workplace discrimination and harassment

SB 726: Bans nondisclosure agreements, extends statute of limitations

SALEM – A bipartisan duo of senators is moving legislation forward that will protect survivors of harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

[Senate Bill 726](#) – which passed with a 23-6 vote today on the Senate floor – expands protections against workers who have been harassed or discriminated against, requires policy improvements for such cases and extends the statute of limitations for discrimination, harassment and sexual assault. The bill provides employers with tools to hold bad actors accountable. Sen Kathleen Taylor (D-Milwaukie) and Sen. Tim Knopp (R-Bend) co-carried the legislation on the Senate floor.

“Now is the time to build on our current protections and give Oregonians the tools they need to be able to come forward and file a complaint if they so choose,” Taylor said, “and to do so without living in fear of what will happen to them if they speak up about harassment or discrimination in the workplace.”

Perhaps most notably, Senate Bill 726 bans the use of non-disclosure and no-rehire agreements, which often are used by employers to silence workers who are harassed or have experienced discrimination in the workplace. The bill also establishes a five-year statute of limitations, significantly extending the timeframe beyond the current one-year limit.

“For too long there has been a culture in the Oregon Capitol and many places of public and private employment that women need to put up with harassing behavior to keep their jobs or get a promotion,” Knopp said. “SB 726A will help put an end to that culture. Everyone deserves a harassment-free work place that is affirming.”

In addition to helping survivors, the bill also takes proactive measures to deal with harassment, discrimination and sexual assault in the workplace by requiring the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries to create model policies and procedures regarding processes to address and prevent harassment and discrimination. These policies will be made available to employees when they are hired, as well as when allegations of discrimination or harassment are made. These policies and procedures will be made available on the Bureau of Labor and Industries’ website.

The bill also gives employers a tool to effectively deal with harassers. Under the bill, when a good-faith determination is made that an executive has committed an act of discrimination or harassment, the employer can void contractual severance packages.

Senate Bill 726 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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