



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee for Labor and Workforce Development
[In Support of H.1935/S.1171 An Act to require policies and training to prevent unlawful
harassment, including sexual harassment
By Janis Soma, LWVMA Legislative Specialist, Women's Issues
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports H.1935/S.1171 because the bill promotes equal rights for marginalized groups. The League supports equality of opportunity for all under state law regardless of race, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability.

The goal of H.1935/S.1171 is to change workplace culture to reduce the currently high levels of harassment of all affected groups. In the past, employers were encouraged, but not required, to conduct education and training programs on harassment prevention for all employees. Simply put, this has not been generally effective in protecting workers from unacceptable treatment even when companies complied with the request to provide training. The Center for Employment Equity (CEE) has found that approximately 5 million employees are sexually harassed every year in this country and other types of harassment are common as well.¹

Recent research studies are helping to explore the dynamics of harassment in the United States and to define the prevention strategies that have worked or show promise.² H.1935/S.1171 incorporates findings from these studies. Regular training, including bystander intervention strategies, has been shown to reduce harassment.³ This bill requires employment climate surveys, which quantify workers' harassment experiences, to be made public. The transparency of harm experienced by employees is expected to bring societal pressure to bear on businesses and help management know when they are making progress. In fact, shareholders are beginning to hold companies accountable when they fail to address sexual harassment complaints.⁴

Power imbalances are associated with harassment in the workplace. We need H.1935/S.1171 to level the playing field for less powerful workers so that they can make a living without being victimized.

The League, which represents 47 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, urges you to report H.1935/S.1171 favorably. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

¹ McCann, Carly, et.al., Employer's Responses to Sexual Harassment, Center for Employment Equity, University of MA Amherst (<https://www.umass.edu/employmentequity/employers-responses-sexual-harassment>)

² Dobbin, Frank and Kalev, Alexandra, Why Sexual Harassment Programs Backfire, Harvard Business Review, May-June, 2020.

³ Smith, Brandan L., What it Really Takes to Stop Sexual Harassment, Monitor on Psychology, February 2018, Vol 49, No. 2 (<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2018/02/sexual-harassment>)

⁴ Natarajan, Sridhar and Abelson, Max, Goldman Folds to Pressure on Secrecy Stance in Harassment Claims, June 4, 2021, Bloomberg News (<https://www.bloombergquint.com/markets/goldman-folds-to-pressure-on-secrecy-stance-in-harassment-claims>)