

Testimony in Support of the Oregon Corporate Accountability Act, SB 750
Senate Committee on Workforce
April 4, 2019

My name is Quinten Melius. I grew up near Happy Valley and Lincoln City. I recently moved back to the Portland area from the coast and took a job with a property management company. I started as a receptionist and was told I could work my way up.

Almost right away though there were problems at work with a particular manager, who commented on my sexuality and “joked” about how with Trump as president it was legal to fire people like me. I found these comments really upsetting and complained to HR about it, but I was told I was taking things too seriously.

Things got worse for me after that. The manager would regularly talk about my appearance and how feminine he thought I looked and try to touch my clothes. He made other comments too, asking me to hook him up with my female friends and showing inappropriate videos at work. He made a lot of people uncomfortable.

I really tried to do the right thing and get someone to make him stop treating us this way. But I felt really punished by my employer when I would try to make complaints. One time I was even written up for gossiping when what had happened was somebody asked me if I was okay and I explained how the manager’s harassment was upsetting me and I didn’t know what to do. I was also told I was being passive aggressive and hard to work with because I kept complaining.

I think I was also denied a promotion to leasing agent because of discrimination and retaliation. I was doing a lot of the work of a leasing agent, but the owner told me that the manager who was harassing me was the one that would make the decision about whether to officially promote me and give me a raise. I was not surprised to learn he refused.

When the company fired me I looked for someone to help me, but then I found out my employee handbook contained an arbitration clause. I had no idea. I hadn’t even received a copy of the handbook until I had been at the company about 6 months, and I didn’t know I was agreeing to anything when it was emailed to me.

I’m now not even the same person that I once was. I used to be a total social butterfly. I hide in my room most days now. I’ve become depressed and feel like I’m always going to say something wrong or do something wrong or make someone upset. My confidence has been shot down and being in a social environment just gives me anxiety. I really miss the old me and I don’t want to continue like this in life because I don’t feel like people should hide in fear. But trauma really can make an impact. I was mentally abused and harassed at work on so many occasions. That is why I support SB 750. I believe workers need a way to hold companies accountable so that no one is treated the way I was.