



Seattle Women's Commission

To: Governor Jay Inslee
From: Seattle Women's Commission
Date: 7 March 2018

The Seattle Women's Commission sends this letter to thank and congratulate the Washington State Legislature for passing the following bills during the 2018 legislative session. On behalf of the Seattle Women's Commission, we respectfully urge you to sign the following bills into law as soon as possible:

- **SB 6298:** Adding domestic violence harassment to the list of offenses for which a person is prohibited from possessing a firearm.
- **SB 6471:** Developing model policies to create workplaces that are safe from sexual harassment.
- **SB 5996:** Encouraging the disclosure and discussion of sexual harassment and sexual assault in the workplace.
- **SB 6313:** Concerning an employee's right to file a complaint or cause of action for sexual harassment or sexual assault in mandatory employment contracts and agreements.
- **HB 2661:** Protecting survivors of domestic assault from employment discrimination.

We believe these bills collectively will better the lives of women in our state by seeking to address issues that disproportionately impact us: workplace sexual harassment, discrimination, and gun violence related to domestic violence and abuse. We also recently published an [OpEd in The Seattle Times](#) about these landmark bills.

About the Commission: The Seattle Women's Commission is the appointed advisory body for the City of Seattle that comes together as a group of committed volunteers to research, analyze and make recommendations to the Mayor, City Council, and City Departments on issues facing women in Seattle. We are comprised of 21 women with a variety of educational, professional and cultural backgrounds, including extensive professional and personal experience around the issues addressed in these bills. One of our major, multi-year commitments is driving discourse on issues related to gender-based violence and harassment. We therefore commend the Washington State Legislature for passing these five bills.

About these Bills: *We have concluded that these bills collectively help to reduce workplace sexual harassment, and reduce gun violence related to domestic violence and abuse.* The three bills addressing workplace harassment can lead the nation in making workplaces more equitable for women and gender non-conforming employees. Only 2 to 3 percent¹ of people who

¹ Miller, Clair Cain. ["It's Not Just Fox. Why Women Don't Report Sexual Harassment."](#) New York Times. 10 April 2017.

experience harassment formally report it for fear of retaliation. And our business competitiveness is at stake too – discrimination and unfair policies in the workplace cost corporations upward of \$450 billion every year.² The bills SB 6313 and SB 5996 encourage disclosure of harmful behavior in the workplace and protect employees’ rights to file a complaint. Without these protections, we believe a large number of those impacted will continue to remain silent in the face of harassment and assault.

On reducing the impact of gun violence and its negative impacts on our families, businesses and communities, SB 6298 will help keep weapons out of the hands of people who are most likely to do harm. For example, while only 10 percent of total gun violence is committed by domestic violence perpetrators, these same individuals account for 54 percent of mass shootings between 2009 and 2016, according to [Everytown for Gun Safety](#).

As the Seattle Women’s Commission, we advocate for equitable policies and programs that work to prevent violence against women, sexual assault and domestic violence, as well as promote safe spaces, and healthy relationships for women and gender non-conforming individuals. We believe these five bills will help ensure that all individuals feel safe in our communities and in their places of work. We applaud the primary sponsors of these bills Senator Manka Dhingra, Senator Karen Keiser and Representative Beth Doglio. We also recognize the critical work of nonprofit and advocacy organizations that worked tirelessly to promote these bills in Olympia, such as Washington Alliance for Gun Responsibility, Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Legal Voice.

Governor Inslee, we thank you for your commitment to ensuring Washingtonians are free from workplace sexual harassment and gun violence, and we respectfully ask you to sign these bills into law as soon as possible. We also urge the Washington State Legislature to continue to pass landmark bills such as these, that support all women in our state, especially our women from marginalized communities including: elder women, LGBTQ individuals, women of color, immigrant women, women with disabilities, and gender non-conforming individuals.

Thank you again for your leadership and support of these important pieces of legislation.

Sincerely,

Seattle Women’s Commission

² Hewlett, Sylvia Ann. [“When Employees Think the Boss Is Unfair, They’re More Likely to Disengage and Leave.”](#) Harvard Business Review. 1 April 2017.