



President Wagle and Legislative Coordinating Council Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments today. My name is Wendy Doyle, and I am the President & CEO of the Women's Foundation. At the Women's Foundation, we work to promote equity and opportunity for women of all ages, using research, philanthropy, and policy solutions to make meaningful change.

Sexual harassment is unacceptable, and it presents a barrier for women to advance professionally and to lead in the future. It must not be enabled or tolerated inside or outside the State Capitol.

Kansas policymakers must take further steps to confront, educate, and correct the work culture to ensure all interns and employees can thrive. Rather than accepting sexual harassment as part of our political culture, policymakers must confront sexual harassment and listen to victims.

Culture change does not happen overnight, and the Women's Foundation is committed to working with you to develop real solutions to appropriately address this issue. To do that, we need an honest dialogue centered on gender equity and opportunity that includes both women and men.

This is now a national issue, and it needs to be addressed. Hundreds of women have courageously come forward. Sexual harassment remains a widespread and urgent epidemic, and we need to get serious about solving it. Addressing such a complicated issue will not be easy. It will challenge how you think. It may make you uncomfortable, but it is necessary to create a safe and productive workplace.

First, we must empower women and men to report their sexual harassment encounters. According to a 2015 survey, 71 percent of women reported they did not report their workplace sexual harassment experience. That same survey reported 75 percent were targeted by a male co-worker. These numbers show us two things:

- Survivors fear speaking out against sexual harassment; and
- Sexual harassment remains a real and urgent problem in our workplaces.

We can create a culture that encourages victims to report without fear of retaliation. We must show empathy and listen when people come forward. Saying things like "things will never change" or "he didn't mean anything by it" or "boys will be boys" reinforces sexism, and it completely misses the fact that sexual harassment is an abuse of power.

Second, we must work with influencers and leaders to dismantle the culture that perpetuates sexual harassment. In male-dominated industries, sexual harassment is so pervasive that it is

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often mislabeled as harmless joking. This is an issue that must be owned. Men must hold each other accountable -- this requires bold action.

Comments or actions that demean women should be addressed immediately and never be tolerated. When we fail to stand up and speak out, we give up our power to create meaningful change. Additionally, unwanted sexual advances create a hostile work environment and impede women's abilities to reach their full potential.

Together we can build a new culture-- one that holds each other accountable and values both women and men equally. Culture change is not limited to inside the Capitol walls. By engaging our community partners and local universities, we can proactively educate interns on how to handle sexual harassment. When faced with a similar situation in another state, the Women's Foundation collaborated with community partners and experts to create the Intern Resource Network to help interns and employers understand how to best prevent and report sexual harassment. We have also worked with policymakers to develop and update their internal policies to create a safer, more respectful environment for all workers.

We are ready to work alongside Kansas policymakers and staff to develop solutions like these. We are also willing to work with legal counsel to thoroughly review the sexual harassment policies and revise them to meet the needs of today's employees and interns.

This can be an opportunity to not only update policies but restore employee and public confidence. The Women's Foundation is about solving real issues by providing solutions to achieve results, and we look forward to addressing these very important and urgent issues with you.

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