



SB0834 - Harassment and Sexual Harassment – Definitions – Employment Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

Presented to the Hon. Dereck Davis and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee
March 30, 2021 1:30 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges Members of the House Economic Matters Committee to issue **a favorable report on SB0834 Harassment and Sexual Harassment – Definitions – Employment Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Prevention Training**, sponsored by Senator Will Smith.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. As part of our efforts to protect reproductive freedom for all Marylanders, we work to ensure every individual has the right to decide if, when, and how to form their families, and to parent in good health, in safety, and with dignity. In doing so, we recognize the importance of bodily autonomy and the intrinsic right to live and work in a space free of physical, emotional, or sexual harassment.

According to 2018 polling data from Edison Research, more than one-quarter (27%) of all women aged 18 and older and 14% of all men reported having experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.¹ Fifty-five percent of those who have experienced harassment agreed that the harassment hurt their overall career; half of those who reported experiencing sexual harassment said it caused them to change jobs.² Even in the era of #MeToo, sexual harassment continues to be a pervasive issue and Maryland must do better to enact policies to support and protect the wellbeing of those who have experienced harassment while at work.

To strengthen our communities, work places, and economy, we must listen to the needs of workers, including those who have been harmed by sexual assault or harassment. All people deserve to earn a living without fear of harassment or the fear of retribution for speaking out and seeking help about such harassment. SB0834 would broaden the definition of harassment and define sexual harassment for situations relating to oral, written, or physical conduct which creates a hostile work environment. Such changes would be included in Maryland Code Section 20-601 and updated in trainings and materials by the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights. Economic security is an important goal of both gender justice and reproductive justice.

For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on SB0834**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ Edison Research, June 2018, Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: A Marketplace Survey
<https://www.edisonresearch.com/sexualharassmentworkplace/>

² *Ibid*