



A bold voice for transportation workers

ENDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ABUSE IN THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR

The rise of the #MeToo Movement has shined a national spotlight on a pervasive problem in American workplace culture that, until recently, has largely been ignored: sexual harassment and gender-based violence. With a newfound voice, confidence, and power, women across the country are stepping forward to say enough is enough. Thousands have courageously shared their experiences with inappropriate sexual conduct and gender discrimination in the workplace, leading to the public downfall of many high-profile individuals, including media personalities, celebrities, chefs, corporate moguls, and politicians.

But we know sexual harassment and gender-based violence doesn't just happen among the glitz and glam of Hollywood, cable network newsrooms, or Silicon Valley. This ugly facet of our culture exists in virtually every workplace and every industry – including every mode of transportation – in the United States, and too many victims still feel powerless to step forward. TTD's Executive Committee recognizes that this systemic abuse must be confronted head-on, and knows that unions must play a leading role in fomenting change.

This was the message in early February when labor leaders from around the country came together for the AFL-CIO's leadership summit *Addressing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: There is Power in My Union*. The summit helped shine a light on those who are most vulnerable to abuse, including low-wage workers, night shifters, and women who work in traditionally male-dominated fields. Transportation workers — many of whom have outward-facing responsibilities, may work odd hours or in isolated capacities, and interact with the public — are no exception. Take, for example, flight attendants and female bus and truck drivers, who frequently experience unwanted sexual advances, touching, comments, and assault on the job.

Ensuring all working people — including those who keep America moving — aren't risking their safety or dignity just to put food on the table will require passing new laws, holding employers and agencies accountable, protecting whistleblowers, and altering the cultural values that have allowed abhorrent behavior to exist for so long. By its very nature, the labor movement is uniquely positioned and has a responsibility to be a leader in this effort. For well over a century, unions in the United States have enabled working people to take back power and add balance to a system that is too often tilted in favor of the wealthy and powerful. By giving working people — including women and members of the LGBT community — a voice in determining the terms and conditions by which they are employed, and by advocating for policy solutions that impact all workers, unions have the ability to fight workplace sexual harassment, prevent it from happening, stop it if and when it does happen, and hold perpetrators accountable.

Necessary changes to our culture and, ultimately, our workplaces cannot happen in a vacuum. Just as women alone cannot shift culture, unions alone cannot change workplaces. Making workplaces safe and harassment free for all working people must be a holistic effort that involves women, men, labor, business, and government. That's why TTD is supporting the Stop Sexual Assault and Harassment in Transportation Act, which is set to be introduced by Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR), which combats sexual harassment and protects front-line workers across all modes of transportation.

By establishing policies that hold employees, employers, and passengers accountable for their actions — including new reporting procedures and training requirements, and new and enhanced penalties for perpetrators — this legislation sends a clear message that demeaning, disrespectful actions and words will not be tolerated. Finally, by requiring unions to help craft these policies, this legislation supports our belief that transportation labor has a leading role to play in combating the sexual assault and harassment that occurs in our nation's transportation system.

TTD's Executive Committee calls on Congress to swiftly pass this important legislation.

While policies like the Stop Sexual Assault and Harassment in Transportation Act play a role in changing workplace culture and holding employers and perpetrators of sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination accountable, unions cannot exclude themselves from the cultural shift that is taking place. The labor movement must face up to its own history of perpetuating a culture that has enabled the disenfranchisement of women. From our national offices to our local union halls, and even among the working people we represent and the way we represent them, we must take a critical look at ourselves and our culture. Furthermore, we must enact necessary, meaningful change that reflects the rich diversity of union membership nationwide and promotes dignity, safety, and respect for all workers.

Victims of sexual harassment and discrimination in the workforce have suffered in silence and without support for far too long. Transportation labor stands ready to be a leader in the effort to make change. We are here to help end this culture of abuse and bring equity, safety, respect, and justice to our places of work.

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