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My name is Rachel Stella, I am a 20+ year hospitality worker, currently living in Portland and working in the Greater Portland area. I am here to support Bill LD1554.

I want to thank Representative Eleanor Sato for bringing this legislation forward.

As a person who entered the hospitality industry at a young age, a bill like this could have helped me understand what harassment looked like, felt like and how to deal with it. Instead, I felt like I was confused, shamed and trying to catch up to what was happening to me and around me. I started working as a dishwasher and prep cook in a restaurant at 15 and by 17 the servers who were 10 years older than me would pursue me, harass me and assault me at work all while encouraging the boys I worked with to do the same.

Since then, I have been grabbed and touched without my consent and threatened with sexual violence. This creates instability in our jobs, feeling we must get out of the harmful environment or are fired for speaking up. All while taking our focus away from our job, caring for people, and doing what we love to do. I don't think I have ever worked with a woman, transperson or non-binary person who hasn't experienced minor to severe forms of sexual harassment or assault in the hospitality industry, either from owners, managers, supervisors, co-workers or customers.

As my career in hospitality went on, my understanding of what was happening became clearer and communication between my co-workers and I helped keep us safer, but the support was severely lacking. Owners, managers, and supervisors ignored what was happening, would victim blame or were complicit in harm events. They were unprepared for harm events to happen, how to mediate between workers and how to support them in the aftermath.

I've had sexual harassment training at one hospitality job much later in my career and I dreaded it. Why? Because I've lived through some version of the depicted scenarios in the hospitality industry and did not want to relive them. But no matter how uncomfortable they are to watch; I would still do it knowing that someone who hasn't received this training or a young person entering in this field would have a better understanding of appropriate workplace behavior and their right to safety as a worker.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Dept. of Labor for hearing our concerns and ask that you support Bill LD 1554. Thank you