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I started in the restaurant industry at 19 years old, as a host at the now closed On the Border which used to be located right outside the Maine mall, at this location I was subjected to advances by a much older coworker, a dishwasher and prep cook in his mid thirties. I wish I could say that was the last time I had to deal with uncomfortable advances and straight up harassment in my 11 years in this industry, working in restaurants in the Portland area. At times when I should have brought harassment to the attention of management, I did not say anything for fear of retaliation. I endured it. Even when I was so uncomfortable working with certain coworkers, I dressed plainly and stopped wearing makeup in order to not attract attention. When I brought it up at one workplace(this restaurant is now also closed) management was dismissive. I have also seen positive examples of management and ownership taking harassment seriously, but employees/ lower management having to go over the heads of upper management and take concerns to the owner who swiftly investigated and fired the offending employee. It was bittersweet to see because the upper management, in question, who defended this employee's behavior said " that's just how chefs are" was also a woman. As women in this industry we know harassment all too well. We cannot say " boys will be boys" and " chefs will be chefs" . Chefs do not have a pass, no matter how culinary talented, no matter what education they have, to get away with harassment. It creates a hostile working environment. No one should have to go into work and be subjected to harassment. Sadly this is the case for far too many workers in the restaurant industry in Maine.

I support this bill, I think management need to also be trained to look out for signs of harassment and mediate whenever possible so young women(or people in the industry I acknowledge that harassment can be perpetrated by any gender towards any gender, my experiences as a woman have overwhelmingly been men as perpetrators but men can also be subject to harassment of course) in the industry feel empowered not only to discuss harassment with management but also feel protected by management. Thank you Representative Sato for bringing this bill forth, I urge the legislature to support this bill, for all the restaurant industry workers who need safe guard and support, vote yes to say " we do not tolerate sexual harassment in the workplace."

Thank you, I appreciate your time.