



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Alessandra Biaggi

SURVIVORS FIRST: NYS SENATE PASSES SENATOR BIAGGI BILL TO PROTECT ALL NEW YORKERS AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

ALESSANDRA BIAGGI June 19, 2019

ALBANY, NY – Today the New York State Senate passed legislation sponsored by State Senator Alessandra Biaggi to expand protections against sexual harassment and discrimination, and hold New York employers, agencies, and organizations liable for all forms of workplace sexual harassment and discrimination. After holding the first public hearings on the issue in 27 years and months of advocacy, this is a major victory for survivors and workers across the state.

State Senator Alessandra Biaggi (D-Bronx/Westchester) issued the following statement:

“Today’s victory is a culmination of the blood, sweat, and tears of courageous survivors, fierce advocates, and dedicated lawmakers. From the very beginning, this process has been about doing the necessary work to address the ways in which our current laws and systems silence victims of sexual harassment – even when that has meant engaging in difficult conversations and diving head first into territories perviously deemed off limits. With this legislation, employers across all sectors will be held accountable for addressing all forms of sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace and survivors will be given the necessary time to report complaints and seek the justice they deserve.

I want to thank Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for her unwavering support in moving this legislation forward, and my partner in the Assembly, Assemblymember Aravella Simotas. However, it is the advocates and the members of the Sexual Harassment Working Group to which I owe the most gratitude. It is because of their courage to share their survivor stories, their resilience to overcome the obstacles placed before them, their strength to fight back when they were told no, and their selfless commitment to making New York a safer place for everyone, that New Yorkers today will now be better protected against sexual assault and harassment.

Today's victory is not won in isolation – this is only the beginning of our journey towards building a truly harassment-free New York for all.”

“The legislation we are passing today is a sea change in our employment discrimination laws. These comprehensive reforms will empower workers and make it easier to hold bad actors accountable. With the passage of this bill, New York will take a meaningful step forward in preventing workplace harassment and transforming the culture that enables abusers to thrive. I am incredibly grateful to the Sexual Harassment Working Group, NELA and all the advocates who have given us their invaluable insights and worked tirelessly to advance this survivor-centered, trauma-informed legislation to protect workers throughout the state,” said Assemblymember Aravella Simotas.

"We formed the Sexual Harassment Working Group so Albany would face its past, to protect future workers. Senator Biaggi has shaken the legislature to confront the issues that matter most to New Yorkers. Together, we pushed for public hearings, and today's bill is the result of centering survivors' voices to craft meaningful legislation that will truly protect workers. We don't yet have the strongest laws in the nation, but we're a lot closer, and we'll continue to work until we do," said the Sexual Harassment Working Group in a joint statement.

"The new Human Rights Law not only shields New Yorkers from the erosion of employee civil rights at the federal level, but moves New York to the forefront of states acknowledging the importance of safe and inclusive workplaces for all employees," said Miriam Clark, President of the National Employment Lawyers Association/New York. "We are grateful to the sponsors for championing this groundbreaking legislation."

"We applaud the State Legislature taking action today to expand worker protections and combat sexual harassment on the job. Sexual harassment is an insidious issue, and the painful reality is that it affects untold numbers of workers throughout this state and the country. For far too long we've had loopholes and gaps in employment laws that have allowed harassment to continue. I commend Senator Biaggi and Assemblywoman Simotas for their leadership on this important issue and the New York State Legislature for voting on the side of workers today," said Dennis Trainor, Vice President Communications Workers of America, District 1.