



New Jersey Senate
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February 20, 2019

To The 67 Women Who Spoke Out In Support of Legislative Hearings That Support Sexual Assault Victims and Lead To Meaningful Reforms:

Back in October of 2018, as the Legislative Select Oversight Committee was being formed to examine public sector hiring practices and to review the procedures by government in response to allegations of sexual assault, abuse and harassment, you issued a public letter urging the committee to “proceed in a collaborative way that does not politicize the process” and to “focus our efforts to further the goal of creating better systems and structures in New Jersey for survivors of sexual assault.”

Now that the bipartisan, bicameral Oversight Committee has held eight day-long hearings with testimony from an array of witnesses it is clear that we have operated in a professional and responsible way that respects the seriousness of the issues we are confronting. We have proven ourselves to be a fact-finding committee that has maintained focus on survivors of sexual assault as well as the hiring practices that allowed a government employee accused of sexual assault to evade accountability. The hearings provided a forum for Katie Brennan, who demonstrated her courage and resolve as she recounted her experience in seeking justice..

The Committee is now entering the phase where we will hear from experts on the challenges facing survivors, as well as from experts on State employment law, to assist us in developing policies and procedures that ensure that survivors are taken seriously, that credible allegations are thoroughly investigated, that offenders are held accountable, that clear and accessible complaint procedures are in place, and that steps are taken to prevent abuses. These are our shared objectives.

An important step in delivering meaningful reform is the legislation that would make non-disclosure agreements in cases of sexual assault and sexual harassment unenforceable against employees who are survivors. These non-disclosure agreements have been used to silence and intimidate survivors of sexual assault and harassment as well as victims of discrimination and retaliation. Limiting these so-called confidentiality agreements will help eliminate the secrecy that too often allows abuses to continue. It should no longer be appropriate to buy forced silence that further victimizes assault survivors. This bill will not force survivors to remain silent, but will give them a choice.

The bill that would help accomplish this, S-121, gained the unanimous approval of the Senate with a vote of 36-0 and an overwhelming vote of 68-3 by the General Assembly. It is now on the Governor's desk.

While I believe that the Governor recognizes the importance of reforming the way in which sexual assault and harassment survivors are treated, there are many business interests allied in opposition to this bill. I ask all of you to join me in urging the Governor to stand up against these special interests and sign this bill into law so that we can take a meaningful step forward in support of sexual assault survivors and in preventing cases of assault, harassment and intimidation. Thank you in advance for your active support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Loretta Weinberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Loretta Weinberg
Senate Majority Leader
Co-chair of the New Jersey Legislative
Select Oversight Committee