Legislation Text

File #: 180219, **Version:** 0

Calling for the prompt discharge of the #METOO Act from the Pennsylvania House's Committee on Labor and Industry with an affirmative and favorable recommendation.

WHEREAS, In late 2017, countless brave people came forward to share stories of the sexual harassment and assault, unwanted advances, and toxic environments that they were forced to endure, often using the Internet hashtag "#MeToo" to demonstrate solidarity and the glaring pervasiveness of these issues. To this day, people are still courageously recounting their experiences, and although these actions have never been acceptable, the calls for change now have a renewed fervor; and

WHEREAS, In December 2017, Pennsylvania Representative Leanne Krueger-Braneky announced that she would introduce the Member and Employee Training and Oversight on Pennsylvania General Assembly Act, or "#METOO Act". This legislation would create a new office modeled after the Independent Fiscal Office, which would hear allegations of sexual harassment, assault, and other related misconduct in the Pennsylvania Legislature. This office, called the Office of Compliance, would act independently and free of undue influence, investigating allegations and pursuing appropriate determinations; and

WHEREAS, The #METOO Act would further prohibit the use of non-disclosure agreements that hide the names of legislators found guilty of these charges and bar the use of taxpayer funds for the payment of settlement costs by legislators. The bill would also permit the Office of Compliance to reimburse employees who are victims of this behavior and who file complaints with the Office for professional psychological therapy for duress that resulted from sexual misconduct in the event that they do not have access to health insurance; and

WHEREAS, The proposed law would codify in policy a victim's right to a lawyer or "victim's counsel" to represent them during the Office of Compliance's proceedings, mandate that paid leave or remote work assignments be offered to victims during these proceedings, and strengthen training and transparency of sexual misconduct prevention and training; and

WHEREAS, As of January 24, 2018, the #METOO Act, also known as H.B. 1965 of 2018, was referred to the Committee on Labor and Industry. However, the #METOO Act has not yet advanced out of Committee, and no public announcement has been made as to the schedule for future votes on the bill; and

WHEREAS, This legislation is modeled after the Member and Employee Training and Oversight on Congress Act, or the "#METOO Congress Act" in the United States House of Representatives by Representative Jackie Speier, with the intention of the Pennsylvania bill serving as a state-level version; and

WHEREAS, The #METOO Act has drawn strong, bipartisan support, and currently boasts more than 50 co-sponsors from both the Democratic and Republican parties, demonstrating that irrespective of political affiliation, geographic roots, or tenure in office, these reforms are seen as critical; and

WHEREAS, These reforms are common-sense, overdue, and much needed, and the passage of the #METOO

Act would send a clear signal that not even powerful lawmakers are beyond reproach. The Pennsylvania legislature can and should take this step toward the creation of a healthier, safer, and more just workplace. Doing so would set an example for other state legislatures, grant much-needed protections to employees, and reduce the likelihood that heinous behavior goes unpunished in the future; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby calls for the prompt discharge of the #METOO Act from the Pennsylvania House's Committee on Labor and Industry with an affirmative and favorable recommendation.

FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby calls on the entire Philadelphia Delegation of the Pennsylvania legislature to support and vote in favor for the advancement and subsequent passage of the #METOO Act.

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