

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2151**

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lynette Lewis, and I have worked for the State of Kansas nearly fourteen years. I am a lifelong Kansan, and I am someone's Daughter, Sister, Mother, Aunt, Grandma and Friend. Today I want to share with you my own personal story and experience of workplace bullying.

My experience with workplace bullying began in September 2011. I was working in a full time position that I very much enjoyed and had held that position for nearly 6 years. I trained multiple new employees and my evaluations were good and stated that I was an asset to the department.

That all changed in September, 2011 when my Supervisor retired and I was assigned a new supervisor. For the next five months I was degraded, humiliated, abused, threatened, intimidated, belittled and constantly criticized. The very first day under this supervisor, I started receiving emails, phone calls and visits wanting to know, if I had this work done, why wasn't that work done, what had I been doing with my time. It soon progressed into, I wasn't answering her emails quick enough, or completing the paperwork in a timely manner, or wasn't signing my time sheet in a timely manner, or didn't answer the phone when she called (even though some of my work required me to be away from my phone, she said I was taking long breaks, etc.

She then instituted a requirement that I had to email her whenever I left the office, email her again when I returned, and explain what I did while I was away from the desk. She sent me a task list chart on the computer for me to complete daily that had codes for me to use for certain job tasks I performed. It tracked my time in 15 minute increments and I had to complete it and send it to her at the end of each day. I completed the job task chart and emailed her as required but was quickly told I wasn't completing it correctly either. She sent me an email that spelled out how many minutes it should take to review an email, (0.37 seconds)

and told me, “No one ever receives more than 25 phone calls in one day.” This despite the fact that in my position I would receive more than 25 work phone calls in a single morning.

I was then moved out of my position to another position in a different building but still in the same department. My work area was a storage room. Storage items had been moved to one side so a computer could be added for me to do my work. It was filthy so I cleaned it up but then was told that I had wasted valuable time and should have been completing my work.

My supervisor said, “You’re not allowed to shut the door, I want to be able to look out my office door and see what you are doing at all times.” There were 14 other employees in this department other than myself. All of them had keys to get into the building but I was told that I wouldn’t need one because someone would always be there to let me in. That wasn’t true. Many times I arrived at work before anyone was there and stood outside the building waiting on someone to arrive and let me in so I could start my work day. Four months later, I finally received keys.

There was a white board with all of the staffs’ names on it so you could look to see if that person was at work or gone and where. One of my co-workers added my name to the board and was told to erase it because I wasn’t allowed to have my name on the board. The emails, phone calls and visits increased and now weekly meetings were added. My supervisor would call me into her office for a meeting so she could give me pages of feedbacks and add items to my PMP since I was incapable of doing my job. I was told how bad my work was and how much time I was wasting. She then required me to send her an email at the end of each day detailing my work minute by minute. I did as she asked but once again was told it wasn’t completed correctly. There were two minutes here, seven minutes there etc... that were un-accounted for and she wanted to know exactly what I was doing during that time. I even had to send her an email letting her know when I was going to the restroom and when I returned. I returned from lunch one day at 12:31 and was told, “Your lunch time is from 12:00-12:30, not one minute before and not one minute after.” I was given duties to complete with time frames that were impossible to meet. The meetings continued and the stacks of feedbacks kept coming. Never in my life did I ever feel so humiliated and incompetent.

I could not have made it thru all of the bullying without the support from my co-workers. I was grateful for their support and grateful that none of them were being bullied like I was. They would voice their concerns and were told if they knew what was best they would shut-up and stay out of it. Some did and some didn’t. One of my co-workers sent an email to express her concern for what was happening to me and the way I was being treated. She was reprimanded for sending the email and told it was not her concern. Along with my co-workers

were two Social Workers that went to the Superintendant to voice their concerns. The only thing that changed was things got worse. The meetings increased to daily instead of weekly and with each meeting came more feedbacks.

I would cry all the way to work and all the way home. My health was suffering due to the stress from the bullying. I was told by my Doctor that my health was not good. My daughter saw my health going downhill and would beg me to quit. I would tell my daughter, “Maybe they’re right. Maybe I don’t know how to do my job and maybe I am the problem”. She would tell me, “YOU ARE NOT THE PROBLEM.”

I had several meetings with our HR department about the issues and requested mediation but was told mediation would be too expensive so it was refused. HR supported Management and would turn facts around to make it appear to be your fault. My opinion on this, “Just because you’re management doesn’t make you right.”

It was time for my evaluation. It was a “Needs Improvement”. All of my evaluations up until this supervisor had been meets expectations with some areas being exceptional.

So, now you’re most likely thinking the same thing that I did!!! **WHAT CHANGED?????** The only thing that changed was my supervisor and the humiliation I felt. What’s upsetting to me is, “THE BULLYING NEVER STOPPED AND CONTINUED GETTING WORSE.” Overnight I went from being an asset to the department to a worthless, incompetent, undependable state employee.

In 2013, I finally managed to transfer into a different job to get away from this supervisor. I told upper management, “either you let me take this transfer or I will quit.” Finally, after two years, I was able to have a bully-free workplace. My first PMP in my new position I received an “Exceptional” rating. However, the person who took my previous job started experiencing the same bullying from this supervisor.

No one deserves to work in the environment I suffered through for two years. If any of your family members were being bullied, you would step in to stop it. Now, you have the opportunity to stop the bullying of state employees who are all someone’s mother, sister, aunt, father, brother, uncle friend. Please support abuse-free work environments for ALL state employees and vote in favor of HB 2151. Thank you for your time and I will answer any questions you may have.