

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2151

Submitted by: Majorie Riggins
c/o KOSE
701 SW Jackson, Suite 200
Topeka, KS 66603
785-354-1174

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to address you today. I would like to share with you my own personal experience with workplace bullying. I have been a state employee for 20 years this year. My first 17 years were great and there were very few problems with bullying that I was aware of with myself or others.

In the past 3 years, I have been bullied to the point I was ready to leave my employment with this great state. Then I thought, "wait, that is what they want." They want to bully me, harass me, and make me miserable until I leave. I think I will stay and let them know they cannot get away with this and they cannot do and say whatever they want to those staff beneath them.

I was given a ridiculous reprimand full of untruths and even though I had around 20 witnesses attending the same meeting agreeing with me that their allegations were untrue, that didn't matter. What they said was all that mattered. All I did was ask a couple of questions in an open forum meeting and that was all it took to put a target on my back.

I was in a meeting with upper management and an HR staffer regarding my appeal on my reprimand. He asked the HR person to leave the room (which they are not supposed to do) and after she left the room, he told me he was the last say on anything in the region and he and he alone will decide whether I have employment with the state any more or not.

It was NOT until they heard I had been recording meetings and phone calls with management that the reprimand magically disappeared. It never had to go before an appeal committee or anything. It was just removed.

In my opinion, those recordings are the only thing that saved me from a reprimand and further disciplinary actions until ultimately termination.

Then, management had my supervisor change my evaluation to include several of the remarks and accusations included in the removed reprimand even though my supervisor did not want to. I appealed the evaluation and succeeded in having all the unsubstantiated untruths removed.

I had a great working relationship with my supervisor but the bullying was coming from above him. I asked him if he agreed with what they were having him do to me and he said he didn't have a choice if he wanted to keep his job. He has since left state employment.

My management believes they are above any rules or policies in place and they can do and say whatever they want. I have a recording of an upper management staff person telling me that my problem was because I was a woman and because I am a woman, I am emotional.

Mgmt: "Marge, I've worked with enough women to know, and you're a woman." "Hey, let's be honest, I've worked with enough women to know and their ain't anything unique about that."

Me: "That's discriminatory and I don't think it has anything to do with being a woman or a man."

Mgmt: "No, I'll tell ya Marge, it does. Some of that is just the make-up of women"

Our management is "do as I say, not do as I do" management style. They bully and disrespectfully accuse staff of all sorts of things they did not do, just to cover up their own mistakes or to make themselves look better. Their management style of bullying is due to their ineptness and bullying is the way they defend themselves. This is an ongoing pattern in the state agencies and the "don't question me or you will regret it" style of management should not be tolerated.

HR is very aware of the problems I had with my supervisor. HR never took any action to correct my supervisor or my supervisor's bullying behaviors. In fact, HR even purposely left the room so my supervisor could talk with me without witnesses present.

An anti-bullying policy will correct these kinds of situations for all state employees. We deserve a workplace where we are treated with dignity and respect that is bully and abuse free. I will stand for any questions you have.