

AWIS

ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE

September 26, 2018

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
2468 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Johnson:

On behalf of the Association for Women in Science and its global network of 100,000 members and partners, I am writing to endorse the Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act of 2018.

As the leading organization for women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), AWIS understands that sexual harassment and gender discrimination are challenges in all fields. However, there are notable concerns in STEM fields which perpetuate a climate of fear and violence that sometimes governs the lives of women scientists in the workplace. For example, we know that 58% of individuals in the academic workplace experience sexual harassment, the second highest rate when compared to the military, private sector and government.

Women of color are even more likely to experience sexual harassment and to feel unsafe at work than white women, white men, or men of color. Women of color reported higher rates of feeling unsafe in their workplaces because of their gender or sex (40%) and race (28%).

There is a dearth of research that examines and documents the experiences of women with disabilities. However, research by AWIS, based on a survey of 327 scientists, engineers, and mathematicians, found that well over one-third (37%) of white women with disabilities experience disability-related stigma, discrimination, and harassment at work. For women of color with disabilities the numbers are even more dramatic: three-quarters (73%). And for LGBTQ women of color with disabilities it is a startling 100%.

The Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act of 2018 commissions research and requires data on the prevalence of sexual harassment in the sciences. These data are desperately needed to fill the gaps in our understanding of the issue and how to best address it.

Every year women in STEM leave workplace environments that tolerate gender discrimination and sexual harassment. As a result, the STEM community loses creative, energetic, highly educated women who could potentially develop better vaccines, discover smarter technologies, start new companies and make the world a better place.

Few people report sexual harassment in their workplace because of barriers to and lack of clarity around reporting. The unfortunate impact is that scientific cultures normalize and downplay harassment, promote fear of retaliation, and institutionalize a lack of trust in the reporting and investigative process.

By shining a light on these outdated norms, the Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act of 2018 renews the STEM environment, empowering people to speak out and challenging the community to

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work collectively for solutions. AWIS will continue to advocate on behalf of its global network of 100,000 members and affiliates, as well as women and minorities worldwide. We look forward to working with you to address this issue.

Sincerely,



Susan Windham-Bannister, PhD
President
AWIS National Governing Board