



R-16

Date: March 2, 2021

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilwoman Suzie Price, Third District
Councilwoman Stacy Mungo, Fifth District
Councilmember Suely Saro, Sixth District
Councilmember Al Austin, Eighth District

Subject: Resolution Supporting Metropolitan Water District Employees Filing Harassment Complaints

RECOMMENDATION:

The Long Beach City Council requests the City Attorney to prepare a resolution in support of women, LGBTQIA+ and other employees who have filed complaints of harassment by various employees of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and supports the calls for a Joint Legislative Audit Committee. The resolution should include the following tenants:

1. All allegations of sexual harassment filed by female and LGBTQIA+ employees of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California should be fully investigated, through a neutral, independent third-party investigative process, which should not be impeded by arbitrary timelines or restrictive funding.
2. The investigation should be thorough and include all relevant interviews with reporting parties, alleged perpetrators of said harassment, any potential witnesses to the conducts/statements, actions taken which impacted the reporting parties, and all co-workers and/or all supervisors who may have information bearing upon the factual accuracy and/or credibility of said allegations.
3. The woman and LGBTQIA+ employees who have reported such harassment should not be subject to any additional harassment through their work assignments, disclosure of their identifying information without their permission, or other circumstances as overseen by their employers.

BACKGROUND:

Employees in all workplaces, whether public or private, should feel safe from harassment of any kind, whether such harassment is based on their gender, race, or other identification characteristic.

There have been recent reports that female and LGBTQIA+ employees (working in nontraditional female jobs) of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California have been harmed by **substantiated** allegations of harassment and disparate treatment. Unfortunately, Sexual Harassment in the workplace, and especially the construction and building trade environments is a well-known and oft-reported reality.[1] This reality is particularly detrimental for female employees who are already operating in male-dominated professional settings but also for those seeking to enter jobs in these specific trade sectors.

Allegations of workplace harassment should be taken seriously through swift, thorough and independent investigations to determine whether such allegations have merit, and if so, what employer-directed efforts are necessary to mitigate further harm to the reporting party or others.

CONCLUSION

All employees must be provided a safe working environment. They must be afforded the right to work in an environment that is free from harassment, bullying, discrimination, retaliation and/or other abuses on the job. Female and LGBTQIA+ employees are not categorical exceptions to these fundamental principles.

To be clear, this agenda item does not seek to interfere in any manner with the operations of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. That is not the role of the Long Beach City Council. Nor does this resolution seek to pre-judge the veracity of allegations of sexual harassment or workplace discrimination. This resolution does not serve to render an opinion on whether wrongdoing has occurred. **The purpose of this resolution is simple. This resolution seeks to demonstrate that the Long Beach City Council stands in support of and with the women and LGBTQIA+ employees who work in these non-traditional roles and serve the public through their service, in their desire to receive a fair process and thorough consideration of their allegations and concerns.** This resolution stands to support women and LGBTQIA+ employees in the workplace, many of whom have stayed silent for too long and deserve a fair and equitable process.

FISCAL IMPACT

Due to the urgency of this item no fiscal impact assessment has been conducted.

[1] <https://mollymartin.blog/2017/10/23/sexual-harassment-is-old-news-for-women-in-trades/>;

<https://scvnews.com/csun-profs-study-finds-homophobia-hinders-women-in-building-trades/>;

https://www.academia.edu/7245298/Crossing_the_Line_How_Women_in_the_BuildingTrades_Interpret_and_Respond_to_Sexual_Conduct_at_Work;

<https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-male-dominated-industries-and-occupations>