



Business and  
Professional  
Women/OH

Chairman Young, Vice Chairman DeVitis, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan. My name is Liz Burrell, and I am the Legislative Chair and President of the Columbus Local Chapter of Business and Professional Women of Ohio. On behalf of BPW Ohio, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address our concerns with House Bill 2.

Since 1920, BPW Ohio's Federation of Business and Professional Women has been promoting equity for all women in the workplace through advocacy, personal and professional development, and access to information. We are a group of small business owners, private and public sector employees, and retirees.

"WOMEN MEAN BUSINESS" is BPW/OHIO's phrase which sums up the essence of the organization. In the business arena, women mean business in terms of professional prowess and strength in the marketplace. Politically, more and more women are involved in all levels of public service as well as involved in the political process. The tenacity and spirit of BPW members striving toward the common goal of economic and workplace equity for working women make BPW/OHIO a relevant organization now and in the future.

In the 1940s, after efforts dating back at least three decades, we successfully fought for relaxation of certain provisions of the Ohio Female Labor Laws affecting hours and occupations of women. In 1950s, also after decades of work, we worked with the legislature to finally pass an Equal Pay Bill that became law. Over the years, our members and professional women across Ohio have made real progress on the issue of equality in the workplace. House Bill 2 threatens to undo so much of that progress. We are concerned about the impact of House Bill 2 not only on our members, but on all professional women in Ohio. According to a 2015 survey, 1 out of every 3 women has been sexually harassed at their place of work.<sup>1</sup> A law that would weaken the ability of women to address these attacks as the civil rights violation that they are is wrong and counterproductive.

This bill bans lawsuits against individual managers, company officers, and even some entire companies for overt sexual harassment or intentional discrimination under the state's anti-discrimination laws, prevents all lawsuits against individual managers and officers who retaliate against employees for reporting discrimination, and, because of the way it strips key protective language out of the current law, even the largest corporate wrongdoers could use it to avoid any legal responsibility for illegal acts committed by their managers and other authorized agents. Even more problematic is the provision in this bill that could allow for individual supervisors to get away with sex-based discrimination.

This committee has heard testimony from the Chamber of Commerce and others expressing concern that businesses are being driven away by our current civil rights protections. Well women (and all workers) have a choice too, and taking away our protections isn't going to bring more of us to Ohio. Thank you and I look forward to answering your questions.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.cosmopolitan.com/career/news/a36453/cosmopolitan-sexual-harassment-survey/?dom=fb\\_hp&src=social&mag=cos](http://www.cosmopolitan.com/career/news/a36453/cosmopolitan-sexual-harassment-survey/?dom=fb_hp&src=social&mag=cos)