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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

DAVID P. CLEARY, STAFF DIRECTOR  
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<http://help.senate.gov>

February 7, 2018

Mr. Michael D. Bellaman  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc.  
440 First Street NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear President Bellaman:

I write to your association with deep concern regarding harassment in the workplace. In recent months, stories of sexual harassment have dominated the headlines and sparked a national conversation about change, power dynamics, and equality in the workplace and beyond. Workers across the country are speaking out about their experiences, and their stories have made clear that we all have a great deal of work to do to address this pervasive, systemic, and longstanding issue. Although we are seeing headlines about powerful and famous people being called to account for their actions, we are seeing far less action in industries outside of the spotlight. Therefore, I hope and expect that you are taking steps to address concerns about misconduct in your industry and to ensure your members' workplaces are free from harassment.

Over one thousand claims of sexual harassment in the construction industry have been filed with the EEOC from 2005 to 2015.<sup>1</sup> While this total may seem small when compared to other industries, only nine percent of construction jobs are held by women—indicating that a much higher percentage of women construction workers experience harassment compared to women in other industries.<sup>2</sup> One Department of Labor survey found that 88 percent of female construction workers had faced sexual harassment in the workplace.<sup>3</sup> Other studies have found slightly lower percentages of women facing harassment, but almost all have reported numbers that are significantly above the national average.<sup>4</sup>

While these surveys and numbers contextualize the crisis of sexual harassment in the construction industry, they likely underestimate the exact rates of sexual harassment. Women in male-dominated fields often do not report in fear of retaliation that may affect their earnings or their ability to keep the job. The EEOC estimates that 85 percent of all workers who are subjected to harassment never file a

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<sup>1</sup> Jocelyn Frye, *Not Just the Rich and Famous: The Pervasiveness of Sexual Harassment across Industries Affects All Workers*, Center for American Progress (November 2017), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/news/2017/11/20/443139/not-just-rich-famous/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*, Bureau of Labor Statistics (January 2018), <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Fatima Goss Graves et al., *Women in Construction Still Breaking Ground*, National Women's Law Center 8 (June 2014), [https://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final\\_nwlc\\_womeninconstruction\\_report.pdf](https://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final_nwlc_womeninconstruction_report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *Risks Facing Women in Construction*, New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health 1 (November 2013), <http://nycosh.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Women-in-Construction-final-11-8-13-2.pdf>.

formal legal charge, and 70 percent of all workers never file a complaint internally.<sup>5</sup> It has long been clear that the magnitude of the problem in your industry should not be ignored, and I am hoping that the recent focus on this issue will provide the needed push to make real progress.

As the Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Committee with jurisdiction over issues of workplace harassment, I am extremely concerned about this issue and am seeking an update on efforts to prevent and address harassment in workplaces across the country.

As part of that effort, I am interested in the ongoing discussions, plans, and actions within the Associated Builders and Contractors ("ABC") aimed at protecting employees and establishing an equal and harassment-free workplace. I request a briefing with my staff within the next three weeks to discuss any recent efforts you have undertaken to assess and address workplace harassment in your industry.

I also request the following information:

1. Any polling, surveys, or research the ABC has conducted in order to understand the scope of the problem within the industry;
2. Any research or actions the ABC has undertaken to assess and address risk factors specific to the industry;
3. Any surveys the ABC has conducted to solicit feedback from employees about how to best address harassment in the industry and the results of the surveys;
4. Any steps the ABC has taken to ensure its associated employers are fully and properly educating their employees about workplace harassment policies and rights;
5. Any best practices the ABC has identified among its associated employers to accurately assess and address workplace harassment; and
6. Any suggestions you may have about how to strengthen and improve legal protections and processes in the workplace.

Studies have shown that workplaces that tolerate harassment have more of it, while workplaces that intentionally act to address issues of harassment have less of it.<sup>6</sup> Employers and employees in your industry are undoubtedly looking to you for leadership in how to tackle this persistent problem with the urgency it requires. I appreciate you taking this matter seriously, and I look forward to our continued discussions. If you have any questions regarding this letter please contact Carly Rush or Joe Shantz at 202-224-0767 with my Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Staff.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on  
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

cc: Lamar Alexander, United States Senator,  
Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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<sup>5</sup> Chai R. Feldblum & Victoria A. Lipnic, *Select Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace: Report of the Co-Chairs*, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 16 (June 2016), [https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task\\_force/harassment/upload/report.pdf](https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task_force/harassment/upload/report.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Feldblum & Lipnic at 32.