

Workplace bullying ruins lives

Yet we have a fundamental human right to dignity at work.
Hold employers accountable for abusing workers.
Help pass the Dignity At Work Act.

Abuse at work is abuse of power: intimidation and control that strip a target of basic human rights to esteem, growth, dignity, and voice. Abuse of power is too often a symptom of implicit bias — a problem discrimination law stopped helping since the 90s when courts moved from focusing on impact to intent. Intent is a high threshold that makes the law mostly ineffective at addressing bias and disrupting hierarchies at work that create haves and have-nots when those in power “other” people.

Employers create intimidating, hostile, and abusive environments — leading to turnover, lost productivity, and violence — through such tactics as:

Interpersonal bullying: derogatory remarks, berating, gaslighting, ostracizing, threatening, physical or sexual abuse, inappropriate sexual advances, practical jokes against the target

Organizational bullying: withholding of needed information, unreasonable expectations, consistently taking away meaningful work and assigning menial tasks or work below level of competence, unfair use of performance reviews, inconsistent rules, harmful reassignment of workspace, persistent criticism, taking credit for work, micromanaging, ignoring opinions, using schedule changes to harass

U.S. law has failed to protect workers’ human rights. Yet this epidemic affects 30-90% of U.S. workers as targets or bystanders and severely damages them. Targets suffer such stress-related issues as loss of esteem, anxiety, depression, job and financial loss, emotional distress, heart disease, PTSD, suicide ideation, and suicide.

Most employers don’t address mistreatment to avoid liability, even if they say they value safe workplaces. Even worse, many employers push employees out through abuse to not have to deal with the issue. The result: ruined health, lifestyles, careers, and families, and weakened organizations.

In the U.S., no legal protections protect from workplace bullying — unlike Canada, France, Belgium, and Sweden. The U.S. has laws protecting classes and groups of people based only on race, color, national origin, religion, age status over 40, and disability, but they aren’t effective at protecting marginalized workers regardless of whether they are a member of a protected class or group. Gaps in the law and an inability to access or navigate the legal system leave most U.S. targets with no remedy.

The Dignity At Work Act (DAWA) gives targets of workplace bullying a legal right to seek damages and catches the United States up with all other Western industrialized nations. The bill:

Establishes a positive right to dignity in the workplace to assure that harm to human rights are prohibited. Assures targets are made whole from the harm of a hostile environment and the economic, psychological, emotional, and physical harm from abuse. Used for nearly 30 years, this EEO standard hasn’t led to an overrun with frivolous claims but has assured a remedy for targets before they suffer irreparable damage. Builds on our learning of the importance of agencies enforcing employment laws and in providing access to remedies, especially for low wage workers in our pay-to-play legal system. Holds employers accountable while eliminating claims for petty slights.

The Dignity At Work Act will require employers to take all reasonably necessary steps to prevent, detect, remedy, and eliminate workplace bullying and will not provide immunity to employers for bullying that harms workers in their workplaces. It’s time to make human rights a priority at work.

Protect dignity at work. Make DAWA law.

Fighting for justice through law
(publicly or behind-the-scenes)

can help you heal and take back your power.

Find your state legislators at OpenStates.org.

Ask them to help pass the Dignity At Work Act.

Dignity AT WORK ACT
DignityAtWorkAct.org