

Statement to be made in person. (Can be read in 3 minutes).

My name is Lisa Bigelow. I'm a State employee with over 28 years' service and a stellar performance record. I've been a victim of workplace bullying several times throughout my career; the last occurrence spanned five years. I've provided written testimony about SB 1035 and ways you can improve on the draft language. I'm here to tell you my story.

I was bullied by a supervisor over a five year period.

I was not the only person in the office being bullied.

The supervisor used a "divide and conquer" strategy.

Her acts of bullying were malicious, intentional, and strategic.

Her words were emotionally and psychologically abusive.

Her tactics were refined. She'd call me into her office, shut the door, sit across me with a blank tablet on her lap, begin with some commentary about how I must never have been good enough to please my mother, and then her verbal tirade would begin.

If I attempted to interrupt her, she would tell me not to argue.

If I started to cry, her words became more intense, her face turned red and her nostrils flared.

When she became really angry, she'd stand up and tower over me.

This happened more than two dozen times over five years; when it happened was random, so I went to work every day fearing today would be the day.

During one particularly nasty episode, I decided I had had enough and attempted to leave her office.

She rose from her seat and blocked the door, told me that I could not leave her office crying.

I sat back down in defeat and started to cry harder.

I was on the verge of hyper-ventilating, she approached me and physically shoved my head between my legs. It made the situation worse. I struggled free and worked to compose myself, as it was clear that being tear-free was the only way I could leave.

In hindsight, I wish I had called the police; I didn't because I was terrified of her.

The following day, I went to my Union. They told me there was nothing they could do but listen, they had no role in such matters, and that our contract didn't require bosses to be nice.

Next I went HR. They politely listened, and then told me there was nothing they could do, she was my boss, and I needed to figure out how to work with her. They could not or would not see beyond the organizational chart to see the real issue.

Undeterred, I next went to the agency's Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman proceeded to schedule a time to meet her, but when he arrived for the meeting, she physically threw him out of her office and slammed the door.

That led to the whole office getting called in and yelled at for going to the Ombudsman

Finally, I went to the only office left - Diversity and Equity. They were sympathetic but said this was beyond the scope of their office.

Late one weekday night, on the verge of contemplating the unthinkable, I called the hotline of our Employee Assistance Program.

Beginning the next morning and over the next three years I worked with my EAP therapist to develop strategies to protect myself from this boss and her bullying behaviors.

Sadly, taking care of myself meant trying to stay out of harm's way and so I had to sit by and watch a long-time colleague get sabotaged and ultimately fired, another colleague quit abruptly after a mental breakdown, and a third colleague suffer as miserably as I had. Finally, the boss suddenly decided to retire.

Nothing in the proposed bill will stop this situation from happening to me again, or give me any legal recourse if it does.

I implore you to amend this bill to give all Connecticut workers legal recourse against these workplace aggressors.

Thank you.