

Dear Colleague:

We have noticed a recent uptick of workplace harassment based on national origin. We are writing this letter to remind employers of their obligations. We are pleased to be joined on this letter by the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity (CWCSEO), which serves as a public information and education partner in ensuring that our workplaces are nondiscriminatory environments for all workers.

The purpose of this letter is to remind you that, in addition to being a Federal Civil Rights violation, harassment and bullying based on race, color, religion or creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, marital status, age, intellectual, mental or physical disability, perceived disability, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression or status as a veteran constitute a violation of Connecticut laws. Places of employment have an affirmative obligation to prevent and respond to harassment and bullying that is based on the protected class of the victim. You, as an employer, have both the ability and obligation to prevent workplace harassment and to eliminate its harmful effects. Further, pursuant to state law, an employer may not discriminate, fail to hire, or fail to promote based on an individual's protected class status such as race, color, national origin, ancestry, etc.

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) has jurisdiction over complaints of discrimination based on the protected classes listed above. While Connecticut law is co-extensive with Federal law in many respects, Connecticut law often provides more protections to individuals than may be available under the Federal law. Failure to address harassment or bullying based on the protected classes listed above can lead to liability for the employer and result in damages being assessed if the employer knows about but fails to act to prevent or stop said conduct. Under Connecticut law, these complaints can be brought before the CHRO who dual files the cases with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission for federal issues. The CHRO will investigate both the state and federal complaint. Failure to appropriately respond to complaints of this kind can be economically costly.

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities is available to assist you in obtaining training and resources that you may need to respond to these complaints. We are also available to provide training to your staff. Additionally, the CWCSEO is eager to assist you in any way through public information sessions, civic discussions, and resource advocacy. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.