

RI House Labor Committee  
RI State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

April 29, 2024

**Re: Testimony in Support of H8044 titled Workplace Psychological Safety Act**

Dear Chair Corvese, First Vice Chair Messier, Second Vice Chair Alzate, and Honorable House Labor Committee members:

My name is Jacqueline A. Watkins, and I am a member of **End Workplace Abuse**.

I support H8044, the Workplace Psychological Safety Act. I have experienced a workplace environment where I cried going into work, on my way home, caused me anxiety, and deteriorated my health.

- I am a retired Chicago Police Officer serving for 24 years, recently retired due to constructive dismissal due to Psychological Abuse. I served in field patrol for 18 years before being granted my dream position of being assigned to the Crisis Intervention Team /Critical Response Unit to teach at the Chicago Police Training Academy and respond to call outs for crisis mental health situations.
- I was the go-to expert to deescalate crisis mental health calls and Peer Support throughout the City of Chicago.
- I taught de-escalation skills; a State of Illinois 40-hour Certificate class to the Chicago Police SWAT Teams, Chicago Police Officers and Supervisors, School Resource Officers, Civilians, and other State of Illinois Police Officer municipalities.
- I tried every day to adjust and even requested to transfer, and I was denied. My personal stress was not from criminals but from CPD internal administration.
- There were other employees who witnessed the abuse, and I had gone to my Supervisor and HR to bring about conflict resolution to no avail. My supervisors and HR were never available for me.
- In my review of the CIT unit, I was falsely labeled a troublemaker due to my integrity of not going along with the status-quo and breaking the "code of silence" for exposing bullying. The abuse was condoned and encouraged by many supervisors.
- I reported the bullying and psychological abuse to be only gaslighted, ostracized, isolated, yelled at, demeaned, and narrative falsely changed to paint me the bully.
- It has affected all areas of my life as if I suffer from PTSD.
- I lost two dear friends/co-workers that endured and confided with me workplace bullying and shortly afterwards passed due to suicide.

- WPSA is modeled after sexual harassment law. The Supreme Court has already decided that a hostile work environment (deemed by a reasonable person) as a baseline is actionable, and that psychological injury need not be proven. In keeping with that ruling, WPSA purports that a toxic work environment (deemed by a reasonable person) is the baseline for legal action. Targets should not have to prove intent (nearly impossible to do) or wait until health harm has occurred.
- The psychological abuse caused me to go on an extended stress leave ordered by my clinical therapist, taking me away from my passion of teaching and assisting officers and civilians suffering from mental health issues. Thus, the psychological abuse took away essential skills that is gravely needed throughout the World and burdensome cost to taxpayers. It has been proven that throughout many cities that De-escalation training is a much-needed skill and training needed within all organizations. Like myself, there are many workers that are essential workers and when they endure workplace psychological abuse usually place the worker out on mandatory stress leave taking away productivity that benefit many.
- The workplace psychological abuse that I endured infringed on policy, procedure. and my human rights of failing to intervene, take, and file my complaint of reporting bullying, retaliation, harassment, and hostile work environment.

All the above points are true. The result of the Psychological Abuse caused extreme stress to the point that my blood pressure rose to critical (190/138), requiring me to be prescribed (3) high blood medications. The workplace abuse caused tumors/fibroids to grow requiring extensive abdominal surgery to remove 20 lb. fibroids. On my final day of work, during my exit interview a supervisor stated to me that one of my bullies is his “good friend.”

I urge you to vote in favor of H8044.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to provide public testimony.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline A. Watkins  
1727 W 107<sup>th</sup> Street  
Chicago, IL 60643  
Jacquelinegl@comcast.net