

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 14, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Cochran,
and Vice Chairman Leahy:

We write to express our firm commitment to working with you to improve the congressional workplace in light of allegations of sexual harassment and misconduct in the United States Congress. Sexual harassment and workplace misconduct are reprehensible, no matter where they happen. The reported accounts of misconduct on Capitol Hill necessitate a review of our workplace culture and processes to ensure that equality and justice prevail throughout. Given the urgency of this problem, we ask that any continuing resolution or omnibus appropriations bill provide additional funding to support updated and improved training for all legislative branch employees, including members and all staff working in the Capitol complex and state offices. We also urge the inclusion of legislative measures to improve the ways that congressional offices respond to both the causes and consequences of these incidents.

On November 9, the Senate passed unanimously a resolution requiring Senators, staff, interns, fellows, and detailees to participate in workplace harassment training, including sexual harassment. This is a welcome first step to reforming the culture on Capitol Hill. It also invites an opportunity to invest in necessary improvements to training modules and to hire staff with expertise in workplace harassment and worker-advocate support. We request that you include sufficient funding to the Office of Compliance (OOC) and other appropriate Senate offices to improve these trainings and supports.

In 1995, Congress passed the Congressional Accountability Act (CAA) to protect the thousands of legislative branch employees dedicated to serving our nation. We recognize that there is a need to reform the aspects of the law that are out of step with best practices and fall short of the expectations for ourselves as public servants. We also commend our colleagues who have proposed reforms aimed at improving current practices.

There are many sensible reforms that can be adopted immediately to improve the processes for victims of sexual harassment or misconduct seeking help. Every member of the Congressional community including staff, fellows, interns, pages, and detailees should be covered by the CAA and fully informed about their rights, protections, and the available

procedures. When employees do experience harassment, they should have access to independent confidential resources to advise and assist them through the complaint resolution process. That process should be improved so that arbitrary time limits and mandatory processes, such as required "cooling off" periods, counseling, and mediation, do not discourage reporting. We support these calls for reforms that have been raised by members on both sides of the aisle.

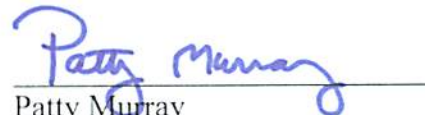
While we believe there are more steps that Congress will need to take to fully address issues of harassment and misconduct, we urge you to include at a minimum these common sense reforms in any forthcoming continuing resolution or omnibus legislation and to provide additional funding to OOC to help prevent harassment from occurring. These measures can better protect those public servants working in Congress each day.

As Senators, we have an obligation to conduct ourselves in accordance with the highest ethical standards and to review our own workplace procedures to ensure that allegations are taken seriously and that individuals are held accountable. We look forward to working with you to enact these and other sensible reforms.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator