

**A3250**

**By Assemblymember Englebright**

**S6438**

**By Senator Sanders**

## **An act to amend the labor law, in relation to establishing healthy workplaces**

The New York State Nurses Association, representing the interests of registered nurses (RNs) and the patients they serve, supports enactment of the above referenced bill which would establish a civil cause of action for employees who are subject to an abusive work environment.

Workplace bullying is defined as the repeated, malicious, health-harming mistreatment of one or more employees by one or more co-workers or a supervisor. Bullying can include verbal abuse, conduct that is threatening, humiliating or intimidating, or workplace sabotage.<sup>1</sup>

Research from the Workplace Bullying Institute reveals that 35 percent of the U.S. workforce report being bullied at work, 62 percent of employers who received complaints about workplace bullying either ignored the problem or made the situation worse and 73 percent of workplace bullies are supervisors. Workplace bullying has become a silent epidemic. It is often not discussed because workers fear their careers will be placed in jeopardy if they do so.<sup>2</sup>

Abusive work environments can cause mental, physical, social and economic harm. Bullied workers experience feelings of humiliation and shame, loss of sleep, stress, depression and severe anxiety. Additionally, some have reported symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, hypertension and cardiovascular disease.<sup>3</sup> The National Safe Workplace Institute reports that there have been instances where abusive supervisors have provoked bullied employees, pushing these individuals to dangerous levels of violence and aggression.<sup>4</sup>

Often, workplace bullying is minimized as merely a “personality conflict” or a “difference in styles.” However, employers who do not address issues of workplace bullying experience reduced employee productivity, reduced morale, higher rates of staff turnover, higher rates of absenteeism, and higher medical and workers’ compensation costs.

This legislation will provide legal redress for employees who have been harmed, psychologically, physically, or economically. It will also provide legal incentives for employers to prevent and respond to bullying.

For the reasons stated above, the New York State Nurses Association urges passage of this legislation, which would encourage employees to speak out against abusive work environments, and empower employers to address abusive behavior.

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.workplacebullying.org/individuals/problem/definition/>

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from: [http://www.workplacebullying.org/individuals/problem/being\\_bullied/](http://www.workplacebullying.org/individuals/problem/being_bullied/)

<sup>3</sup> Namie, G. & Namie, R. (2000). *The Bully at Work*. Naperville, Ill:Sourcebooks, Inc.

<sup>4</sup> Kinney, J.A. (1995). *Violence at Work*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.