



## Commission on Human Rights

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **NYC HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION LAUNCHES FREE, ONLINE ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES CITYWIDE**

*Pursuant to the Stop Sexual Harassment Act signed by Mayor de Blasio in 2018, anti-sexual harassment training will be mandatory for nearly every employee in New York City beginning April 1st*

*The training, developed by the Commission, will be available immediately in English, with 10 additional languages to follow, interactive, optimized for mobile devices, and fully accessible for people who are blind, deaf, low-vision, and low-hearing*

**NEW YORK** – The New York City Commission on Human Rights launched today a first-of-its-kind anti-sexual harassment training which can be used by NYC employers to meet the new mandatory training requirement beginning April 1, 2019. The training, created by the Commission with input from employers and workers, will be available in 10 additional languages in the coming months, and is fully interactive and optimized for mobile devices. The Commission worked with the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities to enhance accessibility in the training by adding alt-text for images as well as captions and audio description for the videos. Additionally, the training was developed in coordination with the New York State Division of Human Rights and Department of Law to ensure that it meets state training requirements; accordingly, NYC employers may use this training to meet both State and City anti-sexual harassment training requirements.

“Combating gender-based harassment has been a Commission priority since I began my tenure in 2015. From wide-ranging and thorough investigations, to comprehensive settlement agreements to make victims whole, to issuing the Commission’s highest ever civil penalty in a sexual harassment case, we are demonstrating that the Commission is using every tool at our disposal to combat sexual harassment. This new, groundbreaking training is another, complementary step the Commission is taking to shift workplace culture and expectations,” says **Commissioner and Chair of the New York City Commission on Human Rights Carmelyn P. Malalis**. “Public awareness and enforcement are both critical, but education and outreach are also fundamental to this work. The Commission will continue its work to make sexual harassment a thing of the past. This training provides the tools and knowledge necessary to identify and report sexual harassment and those who perpetrate it.”

The training uses a story-based learning model, features scenarios drawn from real cases, and highlights the ways in which sexual harassment commonly intersects with other protected categories, including race, immigration status, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, and pregnancy and lactation. It educates the user on the Commission’s encompassing definition of gender, which includes gender identity and gender expression, and of its broad and protective sexual harassment standard. It also provides tools and strategies for bystanders to disrupt patterns of sexual harassment.

The impetus behind the creation of a robust, interactive training stems from the Commission’s landmark 2017 sexual harassment hearing, at the height of the #MeToo movement, at which former Commissioner and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton spoke and multiple city agencies, advocates, and workers from a vast cross-section of industries testified about sexual harassment in the workplace. The package of bills known as the Stop Sexual Harassment Act, signed into law in 2018, increased the statute of limitations for reporting sexual harassment from one to three years, expanded jurisdiction to employers with one or more employees, and requires any employer with 15 or more employees to conduct annual anti-sexual harassment training for its staff. The Stop Sexual Harassment Act training will be easily accessible online for free as part of this mandate.

[View ‘What is Gender’ video here](#)  
[View Training here](#)

As part of outreach ahead of the training, the Commission is ensuring large and small business owners alike are aware of these requirements, working with Business Improvements Districts, business associations, and Chambers of Commerce to maximize outreach. This spring, mailers in English and Spanish will be sent to upward of 275,000 small businesses across the City with information on how to access the training. Additionally, the Commission is running a digital ad campaign on LinkedIn, Google and Facebook.

New York City is home to one of the strongest anti-discrimination laws in the nation, the NYC Human Rights Law, which is interpreted more broadly than federal law with respect to sexual harassment. Federal and New York State courts have required that sexual harassment be “severe or pervasive,” to be unlawful, whereas the NYC Human Rights Law standard simply requires that an individual establish that they were treated less well because of their gender. Additionally, victims of sexual harassment in New York City may file claims at the Commission even when they are bound by arbitration agreements that prevent them from filing cases in court. An award-winning citywide integrated multimedia and multiplatform campaign called “It’s Sexual Harassment” ran city-wide in 2018 to increase public awareness of the Commission as a venue for justice. In early 2019 the Commission testified before State senators and assembly members as to the City of New York’s interpretation of the law and offered recommendations as to how the State may increase protections for victims of workplace sexual harassment.

The Commission has the authority to fine violators civil penalties of up to \$250,000 for willful, wanton, or malicious violations of the Law and can award unlimited compensatory damages to victims, including emotional distress damages and other benefits. A landmark Commission ruling in a sexual harassment case was recently upheld in New York State Supreme Court, confirming the Commission’s Chair’s decision to levy \$250,000 in civil penalties (the highest penalty in Commission history) against the owner of a company who engaged in sustained pattern of egregious sexually harassment over a three-year period. The Commission also awarded the victim of \$422,670 in front and back pay and emotional distress.

If you believe you are the victim of sexual harassment or any other type of discrimination under the NYC Human Rights Law, call the Commission’s Infoline at [718-722-3131](tel:718-722-3131). Reports may also be filed anonymously and reported on the [Commission’s website](#).

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“As one of the drafters of the landmark 2018 *Stop Sexual Harassment in NYC Act*, I am delighted to see the launch of the NYC Commission on Human Rights’ online anti-sexual harassment training. This training will greatly facilitate the ability of employers to comply with some of the new requirements

passed by the Council and help to ensure that their workplaces are free of harassment and abuse. Together, the work of the Commission and the new laws passed by the Council represent the beginning of a real shift toward a culture of respect and accountability. New York City now has the strongest anti-harassment protections in the country, and the City has made an explicit commitment to ensuring that every New Yorker works in an environment where they can succeed. I am grateful to the Commission for their steadfast commitment to this issue, and in particular, for their determination to make the training accessible to New Yorkers of all languages and abilities,” said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal, Chair of the Committee on Women.**

**Senator Alessandra Biaggi (D-Bronx/Westchester)** said, "I congratulate New York City and its Commission on Human Rights for making sexual harassment training easily available to all. Training for all employees is an essential part of making every workplace safe for everyone. This demonstrates what a government determined to lead on this issue can accomplish. I'm determined to see that New York State meets the same high standard."

“I am excited that the City of New York and the Commission on Human Rights are leading the way in the movement against endemic sexual harassment in our society,” said **State Senator Julia Salazar.** “We need a comprehensive strategy to fight patriarchal control over our institutions and mandatory sexual harassment training is a good first step.”

“I was proud to pass legislation that addresses sexual harassment in the workplace as part of the Stop Sexual Harassment Act. I thank the Mayor and the Commission on Human Rights for providing vital resources for anti-sexual harassment training as this package of legislation continues to positively impact New Yorkers," said **City Council Member Keith Powers.**

“There is no place where the intersection of safety and economic mobility is more clearly defined than in the workplace. New Yorkers of all gender identities, gender expressions, and backgrounds have the right to safety and security in all public and private spaces. It is critical that both employers and employees are fully equipped and empowered to uphold that right. I applaud Commissioner Malalis and the Commission on Human Rights on the launch of this free, online anti-sexual harassment training for employees citywide. It is an essential element of ensuring safe, equitable, and just workplaces for all.” said **Jacqueline Ebanks, Executive Director, NYC Commission on Gender Equity.**

“Every worker has a right to a safe working environment,” said **Department of Consumer Affairs Commissioner Lorelei Salas.** “This fight against sexual harassment in the workplace begins with education and awareness, and I commend the City’s Commission on Human Rights for their efforts in creating this new training. With more workers learning how to identify and report harassment, we are moving closer to making sexual harassment in the workplace a thing of the past.”

“Under Mayor de Blasio’s leadership, the City is prioritizing the well-being of all New Yorkers in the workplace and creating a more inclusive local economy,” said **Gregg Bishop, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services.** “The Department of Small Business Services is proud to be a partner in the effort to educate businesses about the expanded harassment laws signed into law by the Mayor last year and being enforced by the NYC Human Rights Commission.”

“It is always a pleasure to work with the Commission on Human Rights to advance our shared vision of a more equitable City for all. We thank CCHR for their partnership and consideration in creating this accessible training, so that all City employees—including those with disabilities—can contribute to a more inclusive workplace,” says **Commissioner Victor Calise of the New York City Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities.** “MOPD has worked and will continue to work with all City agencies to ensure that their trainings and materials are accessible to people with disabilities.”

Level Forward produced a video for the NYC Commission on Human Rights, featured in the new training, as part of the Company's focus to extend the opportunity and influence of creative excellence. "The best workplaces foster collaboration with equal dignity for all, regardless of title or compensation," said **Level Forward CEO Adrienne Becker**. "We hope NYC's leadership inspires other cities to look critically at how they can provide incentives and resources for workplace reform and we will continue to extend our partnership and support to any company, city or state working towards a meaningful cultural shift."

"With this new comprehensive, interactive sexual harassment training, the Commission on Human Rights is leading the way in helping combat sexual harassment in the workplace," said **Dina Bakst, Co-Founder and Co-President of A Better Balance**. "Not only will workers and employers benefit from this new tool, but this training will also serve as a model for cities and state across the country. We are proud to work closely with the Commission to ensure New York City's human rights law remains not only the strongest in the country on paper, but also in practice."

"This training on Sexual Harassment comes at a time when domestic workers are speaking up about their experiences of #MeToo working in people's homes behind closed doors and in isolation. We are so pleased to see a training that speaks to ALL workers because working in a place free from harassment is a right for ALL." Says **Marrisa Senteno Enforcement Program Manager for the National Domestic Workers Alliance**. "New York City's Commission on Human Rights has shown leadership in ensuring that all workers, especially the most vulnerable such as domestic workers, have the safety and dignity they deserve. With this training domestic workers will have added tools to understand when their rights have been violated and to whom they can turn to if they have been harassed. At NDWA we look forward to partnering with CCHR to roll out this training during April's Sexual Harassment Awareness month as part of our month long series of events for education and outreach to domestic workers."

"This online educational tool equips supervisors and employees with important information on workplace rights, frameworks for understanding the complexities and impact when employee rights are denied, including strategies for understanding the roles, responsibilities, and resources that exist inside and outside the organizational contexts in which harassment occurs," says **KC Wagner, Chair of the Worker Institute's Equity at Work Initiative**. "Evaluating the impact of trainings and other interventions is important to the Worker Institute and this tool allows for group dialogue and discussion plus the possibility to follow up with surveys and other evaluatory instruments that can help adapt this tool to a broader set of forums and issue areas."

"NYCCHR's sexual harassment training is a thoughtful, important aid in creating a harassment-free workplace. NYCCHR successfully crafted a victim-focused training by centering the voices of survivors through the use of real-life examples. By also including important information for vulnerable populations, and highlighting the role of bystanders and allies, NYCCHR is leading the way for a #harassmentfreeNYC." – **Sexual Harassment Working Group**

"Make the Road New York (MRNY) commends Commissioner Malalis and her team of attorneys and advocates for creating such a useful tool to address the pervasiveness of sexual harassment suffered by immigrant communities and to improve employer compliance with the law," said **Sienna Fontaine, Co-Legal Director at Make the Road New York**. "Many people who come to MRNY work for small businesses that are not equipped with a human resources department or other resources for training and protecting their employees, particularly around sexual harassment issues. As a result, many workers are entirely unaware of their right to a harassment-free workplace and their right to report sexual harassment when they see or experience it. Starting that conversation with them can be difficult and simply handing them a flyer is insufficient. The interactive training CCHR has built is a powerful, accessible tool that we

can share with workers so that they can educate themselves and hopefully distribute to other workers as well as their employers.”

“The release of the Commission’s new sexual harassment prevention video is an important first step in helping to reduce sexist and abusive conduct in New York-based workplaces,” said **Allegra Fishel, Founder and Executive Director of the Gender Equality Law Center (GELC)**. “Using clear and simple language, this training explains through interactive questions what conduct amounts to sexual harassment and what workers can do to stop such behavior on the job. The preventive aspect of this training video cannot be overestimated. Stopping sexual harassment before it causes irrevocable damage to the health or wellbeing of a worker or leads to their being prematurely pushed out of the job is critical in the battle to ensure both the wellbeing of all workers and in the battle to ensure gender parity in the workplace. Moreover, because this video is free and easily accessible on line, by computer or smart phone, no New York employer, regardless of how small, will have an excuse for not complying with State and City anti-sexual harassment laws passed last year. Those laws mandate that all employers of any size in this state must train their employees about how to prevent sexual harassment in their workplaces. GELC is deeply appreciative of the Commission’s efforts in putting together this thoughtful video.”