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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

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<http://help.senate.gov>

May 25, 2018

Michael Beckerman
President and Chief Executive Officer
The Internet Association
1333 H Street NW
12th Floor, West
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Beckerman:

I write to your association with deep concern regarding harassment in the workplace. In recent months, stories of sexual harassment have dominated the headlines and sparked a national conversation about change, power dynamics, and equality in the workplace and beyond. Workers across the country are speaking out about their experiences, and their stories have made clear that we all have a great deal of work to do to address this pervasive, systemic, and longstanding issue. Last year we saw headlines about leaders in the technology sector who were called to account for their actions.¹ I hope and expect that you have begun taking steps to address concerns about misconduct in your industry and to ensure that your members' workplaces are free from harassment.

According to the 2015 survey of 200 senior-level women in the technology sector, titled "The Elephant in the Valley," 60 percent of respondents reported receiving unwanted sexual advances while at work. One in three respondents have feared for their personal safety because of work-related circumstances, and 60 percent of those who ended up reporting sexual harassment were not satisfied with the course of action taken.² What's more, the pervasiveness of harassment appears to be endemic to the tech sector. According to one survey, employees in the tech industry reported unwanted sexual attention at rates nearly two times greater than tech employees in other industries.³

While high profile cases in the tech industry have helped raise awareness of the crisis of sexual harassment, these accounts likely underestimate the magnitude of sexual harassment pervasive throughout the tech industry. Unfortunately, in the U.S. today women hold only 25 percent of all computing jobs, and women often do not report harassment out of fear of retaliation that may negatively impact their earnings or their ability to keep their job.⁴ The EEOC estimates that 85 percent of all workers who are subjected to harassment never file a formal legal charge, and 70 percent of all workers

¹ Patrick May, *Silicon Valley figures get swept up in the harassment crisis*, Mercury News (Dec. 7, 2017), <https://www.mercurynews.com/2017/12/06/silicon-valley-figures-get-swept-up-in-the-unfolding-sexual-harassment-crisis/>.

² Trae Vassallo et al., *Elephant in the Valley*, <https://www.elephantinthevalley.com/>.

³ Allison Scott et al., *Tech Leavers Study*, Kapor Center for Social Impact (April 27, 2017), <https://www.kaporcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/TechLeavers2017.pdf>.

⁴ Catherine Ashcraft, Brad McLain, and Elizabeth Eger, *Women in Tech: The Facts 2016 Update*, National Center for Women & Information Technology, (May 13, 2016) https://www.ncwit.org/sites/default/files/resources/womenintech_facts_fullreport_05132016.pdf.

never file a complaint internally.⁵ It has long been clear that the magnitude of the problem in your industry should not be ignored, and I am hoping that the recent focus on this issue will provide the needed push to make real progress.

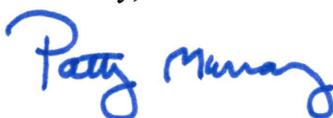
As the Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Committee with jurisdiction over issues of workplace harassment, I am extremely concerned about this issue and am seeking an update on efforts to prevent and address harassment in workplaces across the country. As part of that effort, I am interested in the ongoing discussions, plans, and actions within the Internet Association aimed at protecting employees and establishing an equal and harassment-free workplace. I request a briefing with my staff within the next three weeks to discuss efforts you have undertaken to assess and address workplace harassment in your industry.

I also request the following information:

1. Any polling, surveys, or research the Internet Association has conducted in order to understand the scope of the problem within the industry;
2. Any research or actions the Internet Association has undertaken to assess and address risk factors specific to the industry;
3. Any surveys the Internet Association has conducted to solicit feedback from employees about how to best address harassment in the industry and the results of the surveys;
4. Any steps the Internet Association has taken to ensure its associated employers are fully and properly educating their employees about workplace harassment policies and rights;
5. Any best practices the Internet Association has identified among its associated employers to accurately assess and address workplace harassment; and
6. Any suggestions you may have about how to strengthen and improve legal protections and processes in the workplace.

Studies have shown that workplaces that tolerate harassment have more of it, while workplaces that intentionally act to address issues of harassment have less.⁶ Employers and employees in your industry are undoubtedly looking to you for leadership in how to tackle this persistent problem with the urgency it requires. I appreciate you taking this matter seriously, and I look forward to our continued discussions. If you have any questions regarding this letter please contact Carly Rush or Laura Aguilar at 202-224-0767 with my Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Staff.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

cc: Lamar Alexander, United States Senator,
Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

⁵ Chai R. Feldblum & Victoria A. Lipnic, *Select Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace: Report of the Co-Chairs*, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 16 (June 2016), https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task_force/harassment/upload/report.pdf.

⁶ Id. at 32.