September 20, 2018

Dear Members of the Executive Committee:

In a Facebook post dated September 15, 2018, House Minority Leader Patrick Neville shared a link which trivialized the allegations of sexual assault made by Dr. Christine Blasey Ford against Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. In response, other Republicans, including Senate Majority Leader Chris Holbert, Representative Kevin Van Winkle, and Representative Shane Sandridge, responded with similarly disparaging comments and signs of support for these “jokes.”

Sexual assault and sexual harassment must be taken seriously. The accusations made by Dr. Christine Blasey Ford or any victim should be treated with respect, expedience, and diligence. It is extremely difficult for survivors of sexual assault and sexual harassment to come forward and publicly tell their story. The behavior displayed by these elected officials shows blatant disregard for the emotional pain and psychological trauma that victims experience and further highlights the unnecessary harassment and potential retaliation they often endure.

We cannot and will not remain silent. The General Assembly has spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars, held mandatory trainings, and put together an interim committee to recommend new policies and processes for dealing with sexual harassment and sexual assault in the Capitol. All of this will have been done in vain if these elected officials in positions of power, no matter what trainings they do, no matter how much money we invest, or how many committee hearings we hold, are dismissive of victims. It is extremely concerning that two members who apparently believe that sexual assault and sexual harassment are laughing matters should be tasked with shaping the policies around these issues in the Capitol.

To dismiss such claims and trivialize them as we have seen shows tremendous disrespect and is a disservice to all who work in or enter the Capitol - whether they be a Representative, a Senator, a staffer, or member of the public. All Coloradans deserve respect and should be able to work in a safe environment where their concerns are taken seriously. The word of any and all Capitol employees are worth the same regardless of their gender; however, the actions of these men, in positions of power in their respective chambers, say otherwise. As a result, we question their ability to lead on the issues of sexual harassment and sexual assault. Until everyone working within the People’s House understands that sexual harassment is not a joke, the Capitol will not be a work environment free of sexual violence, assault, or harassment.

We request that Senate Majority Leader Chris Holbert and House Minority Leader Patrick Neville participate in mandatory sexual harassment and workplace diversity training to address attitudes, biases, and behaviors that cause offense to others, especially those who file complaints regarding these issues, prior to developing or implementing new sexual harassment and sexual assault policies for the General Assembly.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Fields
Colorado State Senate
District 29
Other signatures in support of Senator Fields’ request include:

Senate Democratic Leader Leroy Garcia
Senator Irene Aguilar
Senator Lois Court
Senator Kerry Donovan
Senator Steve Fenberg
Senator Matt Jones
Senator Daniel Kagan
Senator John Kefalas
Senator Andy Kerr
Senator Michael Merrifield
Senator Dominick Moreno
Senator Nancy Todd
Senator Angela Williams
Senator Rachel Zenzinger

Majority Leader KC Becker
Representative Adrienne Benavidez
Representative Jeff Bridges
Representative Janet Buckner
Representative Jessie Danielson
Speaker Crisanta Duran
Representative Daneya Esgar
Representative Tony Exum, Sr.,
Representative Alec Garnett
Representative Chris Hansen
Representative Leslie Herod
Representative Edie Hooton
Representative Dominique Jackson
Representative Chris Kennedy
Representative Susan Lontine
Representative Barbara McLachlan
Representative Jovan Melton
Representative Dafna Michaelson Jenet
Representative Brittany Pettersen
Representative Dylan Roberts
Representative Paul Rosenthal
Representative Joe Salazar
Representative Jonathan Singer
Representative Donald Valdez
Representative Mike Weissman
Representative Faith Winter
Representative Dave Young