



MEMO OF SUPPORT

[S4197-A \(Gounardes\) / A6201-A \(Kelles\)](#)

Amends State Code of Ethics to Explicitly Prohibit Harassment and Discrimination

May 2026

TITLE OF BILL

An act to amend the public officers law, in relation to expanding the ethical duties of public officers and employees.

SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS

Section 1 amends Public Officers Law Section 74(3)(d), clarifying that the code of ethics considers acts of harassment and discrimination as a violation.

Section 2 of this bill adds a new paragraph (g) to Executive Law Section 94(8), clarifying that the above clarification does not create a requirement to create a new workplace training on unlawful discrimination.

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

Our organizations support this legislation as it will improve enforcement of our state's ethics laws and ensure state employees who experience harassment and discrimination are protected, and perpetrators are swiftly held accountable.

Because harassment is often rooted in abuse of power, which is a clear violation of the state Code of Ethics, the Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government (COELIG) is one state body that has decided claims of harassment and discrimination. However, because harassment and discrimination are not clearly spelled out in the statutory language, perpetrators have weaponized this supposed ambiguity, dragging out cases for years and wasting COELIG's valuable time and resources.

S4197-A/A6201-A will eradicate the ambiguity that plagues workers. By codifying in the Public Officers Law that acts of unlawful discrimination are ethical violations subject to



COELIG's jurisdiction, this bill removes the procedural loophole that bad actors have used to delay accountability. It sends a clear message that public office is not a shield from consequences, and that the State of New York stands with survivors.

We urge the Legislature to pass S4197-A/A6201-A without delay.