

Mandatory harass training bill

'Old attitudes' are target of Council

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Mandatory training to combat sexual harassment would be required in most New York City workplaces, including private ones with 15 or more employees, under legislation considered Wednesday by the City Council.

A council panel is reviewing the training bill, among a dozen aimed at "comprehensively addressing sexual harassment ... confronting old attitudes and crafting new policy," said Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal (D-Manhattan), who chairs the chamber's Committee on Women.

"More must be done," Rosenthal said at the hearing. She promised that Wednesday's hearing would be the "first of many" on the issue.

"Harassers are too often able to operate with impunity," Rosenthal said in introductory remarks.

The city's Commission on Human Rights is investigating 148 cases of sexual harassment — 16 of the 148 involve city agencies.



Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal speaks outside City Hall after a review of a sexual harassment training bill Wednesday.

One of the 12 bills would mandate that city agencies conduct twice yearly anti-sexual harassment training. The private employer bill would require annual training — with additional training mandated for bosses and managers.

"We will no longer allow women to be diminished, to be objectified, to be subject to harassment, direct propositions for sexual favors, to be touched, to be patted, to be victims of sexual abuse — no, today, my sisters, and my younger sis-

'Harassers are too often able to operate with impunity'

— City Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal

ters in particular, today we roar, today we demand respect," said Tish James, the city's public advocate, and a sponsor of the private-employer bill.

Other bills would require the city to prepare "an assessment of risk factors" for sexual harassment, administer a voluntary "climate survey" to workers and develop an anti-sexual harassment poster to be displayed by all city employers in the workplace.

Councilwoman Laurie Cumbo (D-Brooklyn), a legislation sponsor, said she hopes to disrupt "social norms" surrounding what some people think has "always been just the way it is."

"You can't say you didn't know about it. You can't

say you didn't see the sign. You can't say you didn't attend the workshop," Cumbo said afterward.

Joni Kletter, an aide to Mayor Bill de Blasio, said after the hearing that the administration was reviewing the council's bills but is generally supportive.

Also at Wednesday's hearing, the administration unveiled a 117-slide "Sexual Harassment Prevention" online-training presentation to be required soon of city employees.

Among the behaviors cited in the presentation as inappropriate are groping, sexual favoritism, quid pro quos, retaliating after rebuffed advances, gossiping at work, repeatedly asking a co-worker for a date, flirting, using "demeaning phrases or references such as honey, sweetheart, darling or hunk" and making "sexist or stereotypical remarks based on gender."

The presentation also cited phrases like "a woman's place is in the kitchen" or "a man's job is to make money, not raise the kids" as examples of inappropriate comments in the workplace.