



UNITEHERE!

January 2016

Dear Women of Illinois:

As a woman, you've likely had experiences like these:

Leered at while walking down the street

Groped on public transit

Told to "Smile for me, baby"

Heard derisive laughter that says "You're not good enough" or "You're only good for one thing"

Or this:

A young woman works as a waitress at Neil Bluhm's Rivers Casino outside of Chicago. She's 21 years old. A customer tries to grab her and pull her into his lap asking for a "blow job." She tells her manager and they do nothing. She then goes to State Representative Marty Moylan for help because he represents the district where the Casino is located. When she tells him her story, he laughs.

That young woman came forward. That is why I made this video. To call out the behavior that keeps other young women silent. And I want your help to make sure more young women see it.

I lead an organization of 15,000 people. I'm writing to other women leaders. Young women and girls see us as role models. But even as a successful woman, I bet you remember the experiences of feeling small, powerless, less-than, unsafe, disrespected, violated, or silenced. Writing this, I can recall the flush of shame and the prickle of fear and anger of those moments.

Feeling unsafe and less-than again and again, we internalize the message of powerlessness. We come to hear a voice that sounds like our own saying, "Am I good enough? Smart enough? Who do I think I am?" That voice keeps us small and silent instead of big, engaged, expansive, and daring.

Representative Moylan's behavior demonstrates a need for a very public challenge. I invite leaders, entrepreneurs, activists, public officials to step up and support the young women, the women with the fewest resources, who are making their way in the world. We need to show our daughters, nieces, friends and colleagues that we are behind them, that we believe in them, that we've been there, and we're going to end it.

Sincerely,

Karen Kent
President