

Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act of 2021
Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Senator Tina Smith (D-MN)

According to a 2018 report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (Academies), sexual harassment – particularly gender harassment – is pervasive in institutions of higher education and disproportionately affects individuals who are members of racial or ethnic minorities. This contributes to a loss of talented, highly-trained individuals in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce. Moreover, procedures to report harassment are inconsistent among Federal science agencies, and inadequate communication among agencies and between agencies and grantees may result in harassers receiving Federal funding even after moving to a different institution.

The **Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act of 2021** provides for research to better understand the causes and consequences of sexual harassment in STEM fields, examines policies to reduce sexual harassment, and encourages interagency efforts in these matters.

This bill includes the following provisions:

- Awards grants through the National Science Foundation (NSF) to better understand the factors contributing to, and consequences of, sexual harassment and examines interventions to reduce such incidences and consequences.
- Directs Federal statistical agencies to gather national data on the prevalence, nature, and implications of sexual harassment in institutions of higher education.
- Directs NSF to enter into an agreement with the Academies to update the Academies' research conduct report to include:
 - professional standards of conduct in research and expected standards of treatment;
 - evidence-based practices for fostering a climate intolerant of sexual harassment;
 - methods for identifying and addressing incidents of sexual harassment;
 - professional standards for mentorship and teaching; and
 - recommended vetting and hiring practices.
- Establishes an interagency working group for the purpose of coordinating Federal science agency efforts to reduce the prevalence of sexual harassment involving grant personnel, including representatives from Federal sciences agencies, the Department of Education, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.
- Directs the Academies to undertake a study on the influence of sexual harassment on career advancement taking into account the recommendations made in the 2018 report.
- Directs the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study on Federal science agencies' implementation of, and the effectiveness of guidelines prescribed by, the interagency working group under this act.

Endorsements: The American Educational Research Association, American Mathematical Society, American Physical Society, Society of Women Engineers, among others.