



September 11, 2018

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor of California
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Request for Signature: AB 3080 (Gonzalez Fletcher)—Employment Discrimination: Enforcement (SUPPORT)

Dear Governor Brown:

The Writers Guild of America West (WGAW), on behalf of 10,000 members who write television shows, movies, news programs, documentaries and online video programming, strongly supports AB 3080, which has been approved by the Legislature and is on your desk for consideration. AB 3080 will prevent employers from requiring workers to agree to mandatory arbitration or otherwise waive their rights to a judicial forum as a condition of employment. ***We respectfully request your signature on AB 3080.***

Recent revelations of widespread sexual assault and harassment have focused policy makers on the need to ensure that survivors have access to justice and that violators are held accountable. Mandatory arbitration of sexual assault and harassment claims in employee contracts has enabled widespread abuse to remain confidential and undetected, exposing countless other workers to similar abuses.

In recent years, it has become increasingly common for employers to require applicants or employees to agree to mandatory arbitration as a condition of employment. This limits workers' power to pursue justice in court and elsewhere and allows employers to conceal toxic patterns of discrimination and abuse, including sexual harassment, in the workplace. A recent study from the Economic Policy Institute found that over 67% of all California workplaces use forced arbitration agreements. Unlike union-negotiated arbitration processes, where unions and management share control of arbitration, mandatory employment arbitration is controlled by employers and is therefore heavily weighted against employees.¹ In a February 2018 report entitled "The Black Hole of Mandatory Arbitration," Cynthia Estlund at the New York University School of Law concludes that the vast majority of employment disputes subject to mandatory arbitration agreements "simply evaporate before they are ever filed," demonstrating the power of mandatory arbitration to suppress claims.

AB 3080 does not prohibit employers from using arbitration agreements to resolve workplace disputes. Instead, it requires that employees choose to sign such agreements without the threat

¹ Alexander J.S. Colvin, "The Growing Use of Mandatory Arbitration," Economic Policy Institute, April 6, 2018.

of job loss or other retaliatory actions. AB 3080 provides injunctive relief when employers force workers to waive rights in order to apply for, maintain, or keep a job. AB 3080 also prohibits employers from utilizing non-disparagement agreements relating to the disclosure of sexual harassment and any unlawful practices, which would grant employees more freedom in pursuing justice in the workplace.

Since its founding in 1933, WGAW has fought to ensure a safe and fair workplace for its members, and is active in the fight against workplace discrimination, including sexual harassment. It is time for California to take action, and AB 3080 is an important step toward protecting victims and holding violators accountable.

For these reasons, we respectfully request your signature on AB 3080.

Sincerely,



David A. Goodman
President



Marjorie David
Vice President



Aaron Mendelsohn
Secretary-Treasurer

CC: Camille Wagner, Legislative Affairs Secretary, Office of Governor Brown
Tom Dyer, Chief Deputy Legislative Affairs Secretary, Office of Governor Brown
Assembly Member Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher