

4100 SW Edmunds St. #108
Seattle, WA 98116

March 15, 2016

Assemblymember Marc Levine
California State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849, Room 2141
Sacramento, CA 94249-0010

Dear Assemblymember Levine:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for AB 2539, which addresses the numerous labor, health, and safety issues faced by fashion models. By extension, this bill will also help address the public health threat to young women who view fashion models and advertising images as the beauty ideal.

Although by day I work as in-house counsel for a U.S. company, in my spare time I am a dedicated advocate for improving the images our youth see in the media and helping those with eating disorders. My passion for these causes is illustrated in an article I wrote for the Journal of Contemporary Health Law and Policy, in which I argue that requiring fashion models to be extremely thin amounts to an occupational hazard and also a public health threat to the young women trying to emulate this look. A copy is enclosed for your review and to lend to the body of support for this bill.

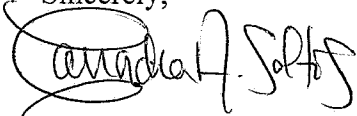
Fashion models are typically very young women, and many of them are adolescents. This vulnerable workforce has reported numerous labor abuses by the agencies that hire them, including having earnings withheld for gaining weight and being ignored when alerting agencies about sexual harassment. Classifying models as employees, as this bill proposes, affords certain protections in the workplace that they currently do not have and will help prevent these types of abuses.

Models are also pressured to be unreasonably – and unhealthily – thin, such that some have died and many have developed eating disorders as a result. The expectation of extreme thinness serves no purpose: there is no occupational necessity to be so thin. In fact, advertising clothes on such extremely thin women does not represent how the clothes will appear on most consumers, which is misleading. In any case, requiring medical checkups and nutrition consultations, as the bill proposes, will help ensure that these young, vulnerable women are healthy and not starving themselves for work.

Finally, many adolescents look to fashion models and advertising images as representing the beauty ideal. Featuring women who are oftentimes dangerously thin sends the wrong message and warps our youth's sense of reality. Although we may never be able to change our culture's focus on appearance, we can at least take steps to ensure that the images projected are healthy ones.

Thank you for taking the initiative on these very important labor, health, and safety issues. I hope that California will once again lead the nation in fostering positive change.

Sincerely,



Cassandra A. Soltis, J.D., M.S.