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## **Pannone Lopes Devereaux & O’Gara and Starkweather & Shepley Team Up to Help Organizations Prevent Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**

Rhode Island – April 9, 2018 – Pannone Lopes Devereaux & O’Gara LLC ([PLDO](#)) and Starkweather & Shepley Insurance Brokerage Inc. ([S&S](#)) are teaming up to help organizations better address, prevent and manage workplace sexual harassment. In collaboration, PLDO’s Employment Law Team and S&S, have scheduled a free seminar, entitled “Sexual Harassment: Learn What You Should Know for Your Business in the #MeToo Era,” for Wednesday, May 23, 2018 from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. at the Crowne Plaza Grand Ballroom in Warwick, RI. Business owners, nonprofit executives and HR managers are encouraged to attend. Registration is required and sign-in begins at 8 a.m. Complimentary breakfast will be served. To register, visit [seminar registration](#).

“Employers are dealing with complicated employee issues today,” said PLDO Principal William E. O’Gara, who leads the firm’s Employment Law and Litigation teams. “The explosion of headline news alleging sexual harassment and the #MeToo movement has caused employers to seek out more information to understand the legal standards of sexual harassment claims, how to develop organizational policies that are meaningful to employees and in compliance with the law, and most importantly, how to build a culture of respect in the workplace that encourages zero tolerance of sexual harassment. This seminar intends to help business owners, nonprofit executives and HR managers to do just that.”

Joining Attorney O’Gara on the seminar panel are Sean Cottrell, SVP, Human Services Leader at Starkweather & Shepley Insurance Brokerage, Inc., and Aimée DuVall Phelps, Ph.D., Director of the University of Rhode Island Schmidt Labor Research Center and Teaching Professor in the College of Business Administration. Topics to be covered include current trends and the law, filing and managing claims, policies and best practices, and investigating and reporting.

According to the recent study [How Organizational Policies Influence Bystander Likelihood of Reporting Moderate and Severe Sexual Harassment at Work](#), zero-tolerance policies within an organization increase a bystander's willingness to report sexual harassment. This is the first study to show the influence that a zero-tolerance policy versus a standard policy statement can have on a person's willingness to report sexual harassment incidents that they witness. It further found that when a zero-tolerance policy is an organization's top priority, employees are more effective in reporting the most common forms of sexual harassment, both moderate and severe.

These research findings, and others such as those reported by the American Psychological Association (APA), found that organizational culture and zero-tolerance policies can be predictors of employee productivity and, therefore, an organization's bottom line. In [Sexual Harassment: Have We Made Any Progress?](#), published in the APA Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, researchers found that employees who report being victims of sexual harassment can manifest into anxiety and eating disorders, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, post-traumatic stress and lower levels of overall happiness. "Sexual harassment in the workplace is a pervasive, chronic problem that can cause enduring psychological harm," according to the APA president.

For further information about the May 23 seminar, please contact Attorney O'Gara at 401-824-5100 or email [wogara@pldolaw.com](mailto:wogara@pldolaw.com). To register for the event, please visit [seminar registration](#).

**About Pannone Lopes Devereaux & O'Gara LLC**

Pannone Lopes Devereaux & O'Gara ("PLDO") attorneys are highly skilled with a proven track record of achievement representing clients with respect to complex matters in a wide range of disciplines and industries. The founders of PLDO were formerly partners in an international law firm and are trained in multiple disciplines. The primary areas of practice for the firm include business law, special masterhips, government relations and legislative strategies, civil litigation, real estate development, commercial lending, municipal law, nonprofit law, health care, white collar defense, estate planning, probate administration and trust litigation. The core values of respect, integrity, quality service and responsiveness are stressed each day at PLDO and the firm is committed to supporting the community in a meaningful way. The firm is headquartered at 1301 Atwood Avenue in Johnston, RI with offices in Massachusetts and Florida. For more information, visit [www.pldolaw.com](http://www.pldolaw.com).

**About Starkweather & Shepley Insurance Brokerage, Inc.**

Established in 1879, Starkweather & Shepley is presently the largest independent agency in Rhode Island and the 68th largest insurance brokerage firm in the U.S. Starkweather & Shepley, held in Trust since 1935, insures the firm will remain privately-held in perpetuity, providing certainty to clients and associates alike. The firm provides commercial and personal insurance, health and employee benefits, surety bonding and risk management services. These services are provided nationally and internationally, through its partnership with Assurex Global. Headquartered in East Providence, RI, Starkweather has additional branch offices in Westerly, RI; Bristol and Shelton, CT; Westwood, Sturbridge, and Martha's Vineyard, MA; Brattleboro, VT and Tampa and Ft. Myers, FL and Brattleboro, VT.