

Mid-Valley Women's
Crisis Service



Serving Victims and Survivors of
Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault,
Stalking & Human Trafficking
Since 1973

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Testimony Regarding HB 3194

Co-Chairs and members of the Committee:

My name is Jayne Downing and I am the Executive Director at Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service (MVWCS). Our agency has been providing hope and safety for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking since 1973. MVWCS is here today to testify regarding the increase in demand for services for victims and the critical need for funding to community-based agencies that provide life-saving services across Oregon.

MVWCS has seen a dramatic increase in the number of victims coming to us for services. Over the last three years, we have nearly doubled the number of contacts to our program; averaging about 18,000 contacts to our program each year. One of the major reasons for this increase is there were six women and children murdered in the Salem/Keizer area in the last two years due to domestic violence. In 2012 alone, domestic violence related homicides accounted for 45% of the total homicides in Marion County. Another reason we are busy is because MVWCS staff and volunteers have reached out to 21 small towns and communities in Marion County to make sure victims and survivors know about our services.

The huge increase in calls to our 24-hour crisis line and survivors walking into our office for support with safety planning and protection orders has placed an incredible strain on our advocacy staff. We have 10 full-time staff in our office, and an additional two co-located advocates (1.7FTE) who spend 80% of their time in DHS Self-Sufficiency and Child Welfare offices. As you can imagine, we are very busy!

Even with these huge increases, we know there is more work to be done. According to the Center for Disease Control, more than 37% of Oregon women experience physical violence, rape, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime. This translates to about 40,000 women in Marion County alone. According to a study conducted by Portland State University, our program should have more than 30 advocates to provide just crisis intervention services. Their study did not even include the amount of staff necessary to provide shelter, support groups, transitional housing, community education, and many other services MVWCS already provides.

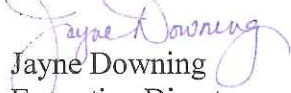
In Marion County, we have a strong and collaborative working relationship with our District Attorney and Marion County Sheriff's Offices. We respect the work they do to hold abusers accountable in our community. Services to community-based victim services are also an important piece of the response to public safety. Think of the increase in calls to 9-1-1 if our crisis line were not available. Think of the strain to services if our shelter had to close. Providing access to victim services does more than just respond to crime, it helps prevent future victimization and future offending.

As an advocate working with victims of domestic and sexual violence, I see daily how victims struggle to access the limited resources available in Oregon. In many communities, victims often end up staying with an abusive partner or become homeless because there are not enough shelters or services for them. Service providers

are struggling as funding resources decrease but demand for services continues to increase. There are shelters and agencies all across Oregon that have already shut down or reduced services due to lack of funding.

The victims and survivors we represent need your help. Many of our programs are facing cuts from several funding sources, all at a time when the need for our services is increasing tremendously. We know the economic times and your choices are difficult, that is why it is critical to increase services to some of the most vulnerable individuals and families in our state. With your help, we can continue to save lives in Oregon!

Respectfully submitted,


Jayne Downing
Executive Director