

Testimony on HB 3194

Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kirstin Heydel and I am the Youth Services Coordinator for Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service (MVWCS.) Our program serves victims and survivors of teen dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking in Marion County. Since 1973, MVWCS has provided hope and safety to victims and survivors affected by all forms of abuse.

As an advocate I see the devastation of domestic and sexual violence every day. I felt compelled to pursue a career supporting victims after interning with MVWCS and witnessing the needs of our clients. Women are not the only victims. Children also suffer from the violence. Last year half of our shelter clients were children and in the past 2/3 have been children. If you look at Department of Human Services Childwelfare cases, 1/3 involves domestic violence.

Prior to my current occupation I worked for the Marion County Juvenile Department. I would say approximately 95% of the girls I worked with had been sexually abused and many of the boys had been physically abused. It was heart breaking to see these youth struggle on a daily basis as much of their problems stemmed from various forms of abuse. I have been fortunate to maintain a relationship with the Juvenile Department and they invite me in often to speak with the youth and offer support.

Currently our agency would like to hire another youth advocate. My services are in such demand that I can't meet the needs of our agency and the clients we serve. I spend a great deal of time presenting in schools about violence as MVWCS wants to educate teens and prevent violence from occurring and intervene if a youth is currently suffering from victimization. In addition, I sit on a large amount of Multidisciplinary Teams specific to youth and abuse. Often teachers and school counselors request at a moment's notice to have me meet with a youth at school that has been victimized and needs to talk. I try to meet as much as I can with shelter youth but find I do not have the time due to other constraints.

Our agency desperately needs more advocates and more resources. The clients we serve need more resources. Women and children often have to turn to homelessness because there are not enough resources to meet their needs. Domestic violence agencies and shelters are at risk of shutting down because they do not have enough funding to support their clients. If you look at the statistics, 1 in 3 women in Oregon have experience domestic and sexual violence and/or stalking in their lifetime. Domestic and sexual violence agencies desperately need more funding to support Oregon's victims and survivors.

Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Mid-Valley Women's
Crisis Service



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Stalking & Human Trafficking
Since 1973

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