



TO: Joint Committee on Public Safety
FR: Rebecca Nickels, Executive Director of the Portland Women's Crisis Line
DA: April 5, 2013
RE: **Support for HB 3194 Public Safety Package**

Co-Chairs Garrett, Olson, Prozanski, and Winters, and Member of the Committee:

My name is Rebecca Nickels, and I am the Executive Director of the Portland Women's Crisis Line. I'm writing this testimony in support of HB 3194. HB 3194 includes modest public safety reforms that will provide accountability for offenders while helping Oregon rebalance our public safety spending—something that victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence in Oregon desperately need.

Founded in 1972, the Portland Women's Crisis Line (PWCL) was one of the first five sexual violence crisis lines in the United States. PWCL provides services to Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties, and our toll-free number can be called from anywhere in the state. If you have constituents looking for help, our statewide crisis line can be reached 24/7 at 1-888-235-5333.

PWCL believes that everyone deserves a life free of domestic and sexual violence, and we are the entry point to services for survivors and people who care about them. We operate the state's largest crisis line—we answer about 24,000 calls per year—and through the crisis line, survivors can have access to crisis intervention, safety planning, information referral, peer support and then we connect them to client assistance funds and resources that we manage, such as emergency housing and transportation assistance. Our advocates also provide follow-up advocacy or case management to survivors who would like additional support. Sometimes a survivor may want a couple of additional phone calls to help get their safety plan off the ground; sometimes they might want years of emotional support as they go through the process of healing from domestic or sexual violence, the criminal justice system, and navigating their options.

A large number of these crimes are never reported to the police, let alone investigated, prosecuted, or result in a prison sentence for the offender. Crime victims' needs are far greater than can be met by the criminal justice system alone—victims need support, outreach, shelter, services, and safety. For most victims of domestic and sexual violence, safety extends beyond what the criminal justice system can provide.

The primary need that people have when they call our crisis line is domestic violence shelter. Unfortunately, most of the Tri-County shelters are full all the time, so shelter isn't accessible to the number of people who need a safe place to stay. About 60% of the calls that come into PWCL are from people looking for domestic violence shelter and about 50% of the time, there isn't anywhere to refer them because all of the local shelters are full. This problem has been exacerbated by the recent closure of one domestic violence emergency shelter in Multnomah County due to funding issues.

We can't afford to lose more emergency beds for survivors. It is time that Oregon prioritizes our public safety resources more effectively—more domestic violence shelter beds, not more prison beds. I hope you will join me in supporting the modest but meaningful policies outlined in HB 3194.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rebecca". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rebecca Nickels, MSW