



Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance¹
The Alliance...more than a safe place.

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TO: Joint Committee on Public Safety
FR: Christine Mallette, Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance
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 Chris Mallette and I'm the Executive Director of Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance. We help survivors of domestic and sexual violence in Josephine County find safety and rebuild their lives. I submit this testimony in support of HB 3194.

Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance is more than a safe place. We serve survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking while they meet their immediate and long-term goals of safety and self-sufficiency. In order to achieve this mission, we have designed programs that address the immediate crisis needs of survivors and long-term support while they rebuild their lives. As a result, many survivors continue to work with our advocates beyond the initial help with crisis counseling, court accompaniment, safety planning, obtaining protective orders, and applying for benefits. We provide support groups, education groups for adults and children, assistance in returning to school and/or finding living wage jobs, and support (emotionally and fiscally) with finding adequate and affordable housing. Support groups are available for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and for survivors who are in recovery from addiction. We provide ongoing support, without time restrictions, because we understand this is what allows people who have been abused to create and maintain the long-term change required to fully intervene in the cyclical nature of abuse. Last year, we served 730 survivors in Josephine County.

Domestic and sexual violence are serious crimes that often create ripple effects through the rest of the survivor's life, and the lives of the survivor's family, friends, and communities. I support HB 3194 moving some M11 crimes into the sentencing guidelines because this still allows for offenders to be held accountable and it will help rebalance public safety spending to ensure local community public safety structures can hold offenders accountable and better meet victims' needs.

Victims in Josephine County are counting on Oregon to rebalance public safety spending. Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance saw a 29% increase in requests for services in 2012, along

¹ *The Alliance logo is a message of hope brought to us by the innocence of youth. The picture was drawn by a young girl while her abused mother worked with a social worker in Cave Junction.*

with the 80% reduction in our budget due to loss of federal funding through the VAWA Rural program. We've reduced staff to two part-time positions. We've reduced our advocacy center hours to three days a week and reduced every possible expense item in our budget.

We find survivors "camping out" outside our advocacy center. They can't call 911. There's one road in and out of town. It's very dark at night and their abuser knows this – no help for them and they're easy to find. Women are staying with their abusers rather than take a chance on hitchhiking those 30 or 60 miles into Grants Pass. They are staying with friends that are sometimes only marginally better than their abusers, sometimes worse. Survivors are getting angry with us, "Why don't you have any help for me?"

The legislature has a clear path forward to provide the help that survivors need. The Governor's Commission on Public Safety recommended that the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund (ODSVS) receive reinvestment from averted prison growth. ODSVS is the most important funding source programs across the state have. Other funding streams, such as the VAWA Rural funding we used to receive, are designated for specific purposes, or are time limited, or can get caught up in partisan bickering in Congress. ODSVS provides the stability our programs need to keep our doors open. Reinvesting a portion of savings from averted prison growth into ODSVS would enable Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance to keep the lights on, heat up the center, and extend our hours of operation. In the past few months, the community has contributed \$15,000 in response to our program losing federal funding and reducing staff and hours of availability. These contributions are even more meaningful to us knowing that our community has poverty and unemployment rates that qualify it for federal enterprise zone status; community members are sharing their scarce resources because they understand how important our services are. But our community cannot—and should not—be expected to sustain these lifesaving safety options alone. Not when domestic violence is a statewide epidemic and 150 Oregonians have been killed in domestic violence-related murders in the last 4 years. And not when there is such an obvious path forward for increasing safety for survivors, families, and entire communities.

Research² has proven that victims and survivors who maintain contact with advocates 6-8 hours a week for as little as 10 weeks, decrease the likelihood they will return to their abusers; decrease the likelihood of being reassaulted; increase their ability to access resources needed to remain separated from their abuser; and, increase their sense of well-being. This kind of advocacy takes time; time costs money; but, saving lives saves money too.

Please increase safety by passing HB 3194 and reinvesting a portion of savings into domestic and sexual violence services. Prisons are an important part of a public safety system, but they are not the only important part. It is time Oregon gets a handle on corrections spending and invests in critical programs like life-saving victim services as well as intensive supervision of offenders in the community. HB 3194 is a meaningful step in the right direction. I hope you will join me in supporting HB 3194 and survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Sincerely,

Christine H. Mallette
Executive Director

² Sullivan, Cris. 2008. Partners: An Exploratory Study The Provision of Advocacy Services to Women Leaving Abusive