

Mid-Valley Women's  
Crisis Service



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

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Chair Tomei, Vice-Chair Gomberg, Vice-Chair Olson, and members of the committee,

My name is Kirstin Heydel and I am the Youth Services Coordinator for Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service. Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service serves victims and survivors of teen dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking in Marion County. Since 1973, Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service has provided hope and safety to victims and survivors affected by all forms of abuse. I, along with other advocates from Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service, believe that the passage of HB 2350 will gather much needed data and will allow Oregon to identify the needs of teens experiencing abuse by an intimate partner.

Studies have shown that adults don't realize just how prevalent teen dating violence is but youth know it is a significant problem. Multiple studies have found that astonishingly over 40% of girls have experienced physical violence within the last year. Forty percent doesn't even account for the youth experiencing emotional or sexual abuse by an intimate partner. Despite these numbers teen dating violence is not addressed enough in schools or by parents.

House Bill 2350 is critical for teen victims and survivors of abuse. A longitudinal study would provide an accurate view of teen dating violence in Oregon. It would shine light on the epidemic and hopefully urge adults to support additional education around dating violence. Oregon youth would benefit from the data gathered as more people realize how common the issue is and Oregon would be a forerunner in showing the Nation how much we value and care about our youth and future leaders of America.

As a youth advocate, I have witnessed how devastating and debilitating dating violence can be. Often youth are isolated from friends, family, and the activities they enjoy. It is very common for an abuser to control what their partner wears, attempting to lower their self-esteem and damage their self-image. One girl I worked with was 15 years old, dating a 17-year-old boy. When I started to explain the warning signs of an abuser and the cycle of violence she exclaimed that I was describing her relationship word for word. She said she used to have freedom, dress however she wanted, and go wherever she wanted in the beginning of the relationship. She wore a huge pair of baggy sweatpants and sweatshirt, she didn't have any make up on, and her hair was a mess. Now, he physically and emotionally abused her, controlled where she went and didn't allow her to talk to any friends. When she got to school he would make sure she was dressed in baggy clothes and if she didn't get his permission to shower, he would abuse her. This is just one example of the ultimate form of power and control.

House Bill 2350 is important because every youth deserves to live a life free of violence and this legislation would allow Oregon to have an accurate picture of the scope of teen dating violence. This study will give Oregon a better idea how to meet the needs of victims and provide more informed education and support to teens.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about the impact this legislation would have on victims and survivors.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kirstin Heydel, Youth Services Coordinator

## Quotes from Youth

A teacher from a high school working with juniors invited me into his classroom to talk about sexual violence and teen dating violence. I was in the classroom four full days and over the course of those days we talked about a number of topics all relating to youth and violence. I presented on oppression and the root causes of violence, the roots of the words we use to put other people down, teen dating violence, sexual violence, consent, and viewing pornography and its link to sexual violence. The teacher had his students write me notes after I left. I typed out only a few of their responses:

“Thank you so much for coming in and speaking. I think it’s a great idea to come to schools and talk about this stuff. I was in an abusive relationship last year and it’s people like you who give me the push I needed to stand up for myself and get help.”

-Girl

“I really enjoyed your presentation and never would have guessed that there could be so many things taught from just one person and I will definitely change my vocabulary and what I say. Thank you for being a great teacher to the class and me.”

-Boy

“Thank you so much for coming in and speaking to our class about domestic violence and sexual abuse and sexual assault. Everything you said really got to me because I have been a victim before and I really enjoyed everything you said and presented on. Thank so much for your time.”

-Girl

“Thanks for coming to [my school] and teaching us about violence and oppression. I really think this is a great thing because it is an eye-opener and touches on a very touchy subject that is not often talked about. Also thanks for talking about porn because that is never talked about and many people don’t know how bad it is. I hope you continue to do the great work you do.”

-Boy

“I really want to say thank you! What you said really helped me in my own relationship and I now know what to look for in an abusive relationship. I just got out of an emotionally abusive relationship thanks to you. So thank you so much.”

-Girl

“Thank you so much for taking your time to talk to us. Personally, it was very helpful for me because I was in an abusive relationship for 16 months and I had no idea there were people to help me. I couldn’t talk to my friends because they didn’t believe me and my parents are both mandatory reporters. After hearing you talk I thought back and didn’t know how I got out of it but I am thankful I did. I am a stronger and more aware person because of it. I am also very thankful to know if it happens again, I can come to you. Thank you.”

-Girl