



2013 Oregon Women's Health And Wellness Alliance



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2903 Before the Senate Committee on Business and Transportation May 20th, 2013

The Oregon Women's Health and Wellness Alliance (OWHWA) urges your strong support for HB 2903, which would close two small gaps in the current workplace safe leave law (ORS 6591.270 et seq) for victims of domestic or sexual violence.

The Oregon Women's Health and Wellness Alliance is a bipartisan coalition of legislators, citizens, health care organizations, and women's advocacy groups. Each legislative session, the Alliance reviews dozens of bills relating to women's wellness and selects a handful of bills that we believe would have the greatest impact on the health and wellness of Oregonian women and their families.

This session, OWHWA selected HB 2903 as a priority bill. Domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are serious public health and safety issues in Oregon and more than 85,000 Oregon women report having been physically or sexually assaulted by an intimate or recently intimate partner in the last 5 years. Since 2007, Oregon law has provided employees who are victims of domestic or sexual violence the right to take reasonable time off if necessary to seek court or law enforcement protection, medical care, or other safety measures. These protections provide safety for employees who are victims, their families and colleagues, and their workplaces as a whole. Under current law, part-time and new employees do not qualify for protection, which leaves these employees vulnerable to safety threats and poses a risk to their workplaces. In addition, employers are not currently required to post information about these safety laws in break rooms and other locations. Consequently, some victims do not know they have access to this important protection.

HB 2903 would remove the probationary period and qualifying hours for coverage of new employees who are victims of domestic or sexual violence in need of reasonable unpaid time off to seek court or law enforcement protection, medical care, or other safety measures. The bill also ensures that employees receive information about these protections, by adding a statement to the notice employers are required to post in break rooms and other locations.

Domestic and sexual violence have a significant impact on victims' economic security, thus making it more difficult for victims to achieve safety for themselves and their children. It is in the public interest to reduce domestic and sexual violence by enabling victims to seek safety and redress the effects of violence without jeopardizing their economic security. It is in the employers' interests to maintain safe and secure workplace environments.

This is a modest bill that makes small changes to current law which could have an immeasurable impact on the lives of domestic and sexual assault victims. For these reasons, we urge your support.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation.

Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair

Rep. Sara Gelsler, Co-Chair