

# Yes on HB 2903

## Close the Gap in Safe Leave Protection for Victims of Violence

HB 2903 comes from the House Floor with unanimous support (58-0).

### **Background:**

- Domestic and sexual violence are serious public health and safety issues in Oregon.
- When a victim of violence needs to seek court, medical, or safety protection, timing is critical.
- Victims are sometimes unable to seek the protection they need for fear of being fired for leaving work.
- Economic independence is a primary indicator of whether a victim will be able to maintain safety from abuse.
- 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.

### **Current Oregon Law:**

Current law protects victims of domestic and sexual violence from discrimination in the workplace, and provides the right to take reasonable, unpaid leave if necessary to seek court or law enforcement protection, medical care, or other safety measures.

- **These protections are good policy for employees and for employers:**
  - Protects employees who are victims by removing barriers to safety.
  - Helps employers by reducing absenteeism, health care and other costs.
  - Helps co-workers by reducing the likelihood of violence at work.
- **These protections are fair to employers:**
  - Employee must provide certification of eligibility for relief.
  - The amount of leave must be reasonable.
  - Employers may limit leave, if leave would create an undue hardship.
  - The smallest employers (5 employees or fewer) are exempt.

### **Problem with Current Law:**

- **Gap in coverage:**

New employees do not qualify for protection. This leaves some victims vulnerable to safety threats, and poses a risk to the workplace as a whole.
- **Gap in information:**

Information is not included in the notices that employers must post in break rooms and other locations. Many victims do not know they have access to this important protection.

### **HB 2903 is the Solution:**

- **Closes the gap in protection** so that new employees who are victims are eligible for reasonable unpaid time off to seek court or law enforcement protection, medical care, or other safety measures.
- **Adds information** about these leave laws to the notices posted by employers in break rooms and other locations.
- **Good policy for victims, employers, co-workers, and the state:**
  - When victims need safety, time is of the essence.
  - This bill will reduce barriers to safety for victims.
  - Will increase workplace safety for all employees.
- **Fair to employers:**
  - Does not change the employer size limit or the current exemption for undue hardship.
  - Leave must be reasonable, and leave is only allowed for specific safety purposes.
  - Including new employees will not add many new cases.
  - Posting information is available for free from the BOLI website, and there are no sanctions to an employer for failure to post.