



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

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Testimony in Support of HB 2903

Chair Beyer and Vice-Chair Starr and members of the Committee:

My name is Jayne Downing and I am the Executive Director at Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service (MVWCS). MVWCS has been providing hope and safety for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking since 1973. I, along with the other advocates from MVWCS, urge you to support HB 2903 so all victims have the opportunity to seek out resources so they can safely leave an abusive relationship.

One in three women in Oregon experience domestic or sexual violence or stalking in their lifetime. As an advocate, I have worked with too many domestic violence victims who were not able to take time off work to seek out resources. Victims of domestic violence need resources for safety planning and support if they are attempting to leave an abusive situation. This often includes meeting with advocates in person, conducting individualized safety planning, seeking a restraining order, relocating, talking to law enforcement, and at times, seeking emergency medical care. If a person cannot take time off from work when necessary, it is sometimes impossible to utilize or access the resources they need.

Over the years, I have provided training to many employers and employees and know the protection provided under HB2903 is vital to ensure safety and economic independence for victims of violence. I want to share with you just a few of the stories I have heard from survivors and employers over the years:

- ◆ An employee told me about how she was not able to take time off to secure a Temporary Restraining Order. Her abuser continued to harass her at work and home until she finally felt compelled to flee to another town. She lost a job she excelled at and loved because she was not able to take a few hours to secure the protection order she needed.
- ◆ One employer attending training on domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking suddenly realized why a long-time employee had recently left her job. The employer stated he now recognized they had not provided basic support to the victim, she did not know about protections available to her, and they lost a great employee.
- ◆ One employee talked to me about what a difference it made to have a supportive employer and the ability to leave work to get a stalking order. Her former husband was stalking her and interfering with her ability to get to work by damaging her car. She was afraid she might lose her job, but her employer made it possible for her to keep her job. The employer allowed her to take time to get a Stalking Order. The order prohibited her husband from stalking her at her home or at her workplace. This made all the difference for her long-term stability at her place of employment.

House Bill 2903 would allow someone in a new position to leave work if necessary to take protective actions and not have to fear they will lose their job. Support of this bill would show Oregonians we value victim safety and the chance for victims to try to start living a life free of violence. Thank you for the opportunity to draw attention to this important issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Jayne Downing, Executive Director