

Mid-Valley Women's
Crisis Service



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

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Testimony in Support of HB 3390-2

Chair Garrett, Vice-Chairs Hicks and Hoyle, and members of the Committee:

My name is Jayne Downing and I am the Executive Director of the Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service (MVWCS) in Salem, Oregon. Our agency 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 3390-2 so all victims have the opportunity to seek out resources to prevent further abuse.

Over 37% of Oregon women have experienced physical violence, rape, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime. One in three women in the United States experience domestic or sexual violence or stalking in their lifetime. Oregon ranks number two in the nation in the number of women who have experienced some type of sexual violence in their lifetime. Intimate Partner Violence also affects men.

Violence against an intimate partner is a serious public health and safety issue in Oregon. Victims and survivors of violence experience higher rates of physical and mental health issues than those who do not experience abuse. These crimes are responsible for nearly one third of the caseloads at our child welfare and self-sufficiency offices, and cause nearly 1/3 of homicides each year.

Victims seeking safety from abuse need to be able to access services immediately in times of crisis. It is essential that survivors are able to take safety steps right away when necessary to prevent further abuse. Survivors of domestic violence are at an increased risk of harm shortly after separation from an abusive partner. Delaying action can result in further abuse. And yet, as an advocate, I have worked with too many victims who could not afford to take time off work to seek out resources, for fear of losing that paycheck.

Economic independence is a primary indicator of whether a victim will be able to maintain safety from abuse. Without access to accrued paid leave, victims are in an untenable catch-22. They need economic security as well as safety assistance, and are unable to protect one without undermining the other.

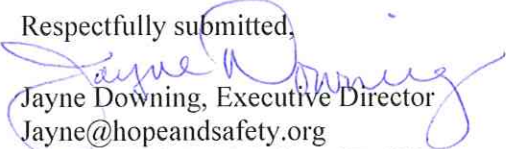
Many service providers – such as law enforcement, courts, attorneys and medical providers – only schedule appointments during business hours, meaning that victims must take time off from work in order to access these services. **A victim's ability to leave work to address critical needs may be the difference between them getting help and staying safe, or not.**

House Bill 3390-2 would allow someone to leave work and seek out much needed resources that may help prevent further injury, without having to forfeit the wages they need to make ends meet for their families. Support of this concept would show Oregonians we value victim safety and the chance for victims to try to start living a life free of violence.

When victims of violence can take the steps they need to achieve safety, the benefit inures to victims, families, co-workers, the workplace, and our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,


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