

Tuesday, June 4, 2013



To: Rep. Chris Garrett, Chair, House Committee on Rules
CC: Reps. Hicks & Hoyle, Vice Chairs, House Committee on Rules & Members

RE: **Support of Paid Safe Leave in HB 3390**

On behalf of the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence, I am writing today to draw attention to the impact that domestic and sexual violence have on the health of our workplaces and communities, and to urge your support of the proposed Earned Sick and Safe Days legislation (HB 3390). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Domestic and sexual violence are serious public health issues that impact Oregon families and children in profound ways. For instance, in Portland, domestic violence currently accounts for nearly ½ of simple assaults and 1/3 of aggravated assaults (PPB). This violence contributes to severe injuries, mental and physical health problems, disabilities and death to Oregon women (Oregon Violence Against Women Prevention Plan). In fact, domestic violence contributes to a larger % of homicides in Oregon compared to other parts of the country (25% in Oregon vs. 17% nationally) – and more recently, in 2010, DV contributed to 1 in 3 homicides statewide.

Domestic and sexual violence do not stay at home when their victims go to work. A recent survey of Oregon victims revealed that 69% were employed at the time they were suffering abuse (Glass, et al., 2010). This means an impact for both the employee and the employer. Businesses pay a high price for employees who are victims cannot access help. The annual cost to businesses of lost productivity due to domestic violence is estimated at \$900 million, and in Oregon, include approximately \$9.3 million in lost productivity from paid work for victims of nonfatal intimate partner violence (Oregon Department of Humans Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Epidemiology).

Earned safe days will help survivors achieve safety.

A survivor must take safety steps right away to prevent further abuse because they are at an increased risk shortly after separation from an abusive partner. Simultaneously, it is essential that victims preserve their economic security. This independence is a primary indicator of whether a victim will be able to maintain safety. Sabotage of employment is a strategy by the abusive partner to control with serious negative consequences for health and safety (McFarlane et al., 2003). Victims often stay with their abuser because they are financially dependent.

Without access to earned 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.

You and this body have set the tone for a coordinated community response - this one is to help victims become survivors. An earned sick and safe day standard will further this goal by helping victims in our community survive violence, protect their children, and contribute to our neighborhoods.

Earned sick and safe days will help co-workers, employers, and communities by preserving safe, healthy workplace environments.

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. The proposal has important safeguards to ensure that it works well for employers as well as for employees. For the foregoing reasons, we urge your support of this policy.

Thank you for your leadership and work, and please do not hesitate to contact us if you feel we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Timmons, Executive Director
Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence