

# OREGON LAW CENTER

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921 SW Washington, Suite 516  
Portland, Or. 97205

**TESTIMONY ON SB 5018**  
**Before the Public Safety Subcommittee**  
**of the Joint Ways and Means Committee**  
**February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013**  
**Presented by Sybil Hebb**

**In Support of Increased Funding**  
**for the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund**  
**in the Department of Justice Budget**  
HB 5018

Co-Chairs Winters and Williamson and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), I submit this written testimony in support of a \$4 million increase to the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund in the Department of Justice Budget. The services funded through the ODSVS Fund are absolutely critical to the safety of our clients who are victims of domestic or sexual violence.

As you may know, the Oregon Law Center provides statewide civil legal services to low-income Oregonians. We prioritize the provision of services to the neediest Oregonians, and much of our work is focused on ensuring that victims of domestic violence and sexual assault receive the help and support they need in seeking and protection for themselves and their children. OLC views domestic and sexual violence as critical public health and safety issues that can have a disastrous impact well beyond their primary victims.

The ODSVS Fund administered by the Attorney General's Office is a vital source of funding for Oregon's non-profit domestic violence and sexual assault service providers and is the only General Fund source of dollars for these services. These funds provide victims and their children with confidential shelter, support, and safety planning services that save lives.

These services are deeply underfunded. A 2006 Study commissioned by the Department of Human Services and the Department of Justice found that a minimum of \$7.5 million per year was necessary in the ODSVS Fund to ensure that survivors in every county in this state have access to the most basic minimum safety services.<sup>1</sup> We are currently well below that funding level, at approximately \$4 million per biennium. This deficit has left us without adequate resources to meet the current pressing need. In 2011 alone, there were more than

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<sup>1</sup> 2006 PSU Equity Allocation Study, on file with the Department of Justice.

20,000 requests for shelter by adults that couldn't be met. 48% of adults seeking shelter have at least one child with them, substantially increasing the impact of this shortfall.

The costs (both human and economic) of domestic violence and sexual assault are enormous. A recent study conducted by the Office of Disease Prevention and Epidemiology at the Department of Human Services found that the costs of domestic and sexual violence in Oregon exceed \$50 million dollars a year.<sup>2</sup>

- Nearly \$35 million of these costs are for direct medical and mental health care services.
- Approximately \$9.3 million of these costs are due to victims' lost productivity from paid work.

These costs don't even take into consideration the significant costs involved when law enforcement and prosecutors respond to crimes of domestic and sexual violence. The Uniform Crime Reporting Division of the Oregon State Police shows that over 10,000 domestic abuse offenses were committed in the year 2011 alone. Domestic and sexual violence crimes make up 1/3 or more of all reported violent crimes statewide. Costs include law enforcement response to reports and arrests, prosecution, jails, prisons and probation supervision.

In addition, domestic and sexual violence are a primary cause of homelessness for victims and their children. A comprehensive study released in 2005 found that one out of every four homeless women is homeless because of violence committed against her.<sup>3</sup> In such straits, victims cannot avoid seeking public assistance and benefits to help support themselves and their children.

ODSVS dollars are prevention dollars. Expert safety -planning and support services provided by advocates and programs receiving these funds help victims identify and explore real options to escape violence. A recent study has shown that access to shelter and support services leads to a 60-70% reduction in severity and incidence of re-assault.<sup>4</sup> Survivors linked with advocates during the post-crisis period report higher quality of life, more social supports and less re-victimization for themselves and their children.<sup>5</sup>

Lack of services can force victims and their children back into violence. Almost half (46%) of homeless women reported that they had previously stayed in an abusive relationship because

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<sup>2</sup> Drach, L. (2005) Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Oregon Women. Portland, OR: Oregon Department of Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Epidemiology.

<sup>3</sup> Jana L. Jasinski et al., *The Experience of Violence in the Lives of Homeless Women: A Research Report 2*, 65 (2005) (Univ. Cent. Fla., submitted to National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice).

<sup>4</sup> Jacquelyn Campbell PhD RN FAAN, Anna D. Wolf Endowed Chair and professor, Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing: Multi-City Intimate Partner Femicide Study, Funded by NIDA/NIAA, NIMH, CDC, NIJ VAWA R01 DA/AA1156

<sup>5</sup> Sullivan, C. M., Bybee, D. I., & Allen, N. E. (2002). Findings From a Community-Based Program for Battered Women and Their Children. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 17, 915.

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they had no where else to go.<sup>6</sup> Domestic violence and sexual assault are a critical public safety issue, and the victim service providers play an essential role in providing safety resources. Statistics from the Department of Human Services indicate that domestic violence is one of the top three drivers bringing founded cases of child abuse into the child welfare system. Providing safety from violence in the home has a direct impact on child safety.

We also urge support for a \$2 million increase in funding to the CAMI and the DA-VAP funds. CAMI dollars fund child abuse intervention centers to help investigate and respond to child abuse. DA-VAP funds provide support for victim assistance advocates stationed at district attorney offices across the state, to help crime victims navigate the prosecution process. The services provided by these programs, along with ODSVS-funded programs, form a critical network that is an essential element of the public safety system. Without this network of services, law enforcement and prosecution efforts to respond to domestic and sexual violence and child abuse crimes would be significantly hampered.

The ODSVS Fund is the most important funding source for survivor services in Oregon. ODSVS services ensure that victims and their children have access to shelter and support while they decide how to move towards safety. ODSVS services, in conjunction with CAMI and DA-VAP services, are a critical network that is central to the mission of the Crime Victim Services Division at the Department of Justice, and to our public safety system.

In this time of great economic crisis, we hope that you will consider these services amongst your highest priorities for smart re-investment in the future of Oregon. A \$4 million increase to the ODSVS fund, and a \$2 million increase to CAMI and DA-VAP funds, would provide enormous benefit for victims, children, and our communities. Oregon is stronger when victims and children are safe.

I thank the committee members for their time and attention to this issue, and would be glad to answer any questions or to provide more information at the committee's request.

Sincerely,

Sybil Hebb  
Director of Legislative Advocacy  
Oregon Law Center

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