

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 5018

Submitted to the Public Safety Subcommittee of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means
By Kerry Naughton, Crime Survivors Program Director, Partnership for Safety and Justice
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Co-Chair Williamson, Co-Chair Winters and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kerry Naughton and I am the Director of the Crime Survivors Program at Partnership for Safety and Justice. Partnership for Safety and Justice is a 14-year-old statewide membership organization that advocates for smart public safety policy, which to us means working with everyone most impacted by crime and violence: victims and survivors of crime, people convicted of crime, and system stakeholders. We think this gives us a critical and comprehensive perspective on needed changes to build safe, healthy communities.

I submit this testimony on behalf of Partnership for Safety and Justice in support of a \$4 million increase to the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund (ODSVS) in the Department of Justice budget (HB 5018). This funding increase is vital to the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities throughout Oregon.

As we know, family relationships that are safe and healthy provide an important foundation for success in life. Being safe and supported at home enables children to succeed in school, parents to excel in their careers, and communities to prosper and thrive. Unfortunately, not every family relationship is safe and healthy. Many are fraught with fear of physical violence, psychological and financial abuse, and feeling like you're standing on unstable ground, never sure when the next tremor of harm will occur.

Thankfully, Oregon has a strong network of domestic and sexual violence services that help people experiencing violence find safety and rebuild their lives. Domestic and sexual violence services literally save lives. They provide victims the tools necessary to become survivors—shelter, safety planning, counseling, medical accompaniment, and legal advocacy. A report from the Johns Hopkins University revealed that accessing domestic violence services reduced re-assault by up to 70%.

Providing access to domestic and sexual violence services does more than just remove a barrier to success from an individual person or family—it removes barriers to the health and well-being of us all. Access to victims' services reduces homelessness, saves millions in medical costs, increases the effectiveness of substance abuse programs, helps children succeed in school and adults stay in jobs, and breaks cycles of violence.

These lifesaving services are vital to the well-being of every Oregon community. Yet they are so underfunded that over 20,500 requests for emergency shelter from violence couldn't be met last year. That's more than two unmet requests every hour—of every day—of 2011. When shelters are full and that month's supply of motel vouchers have run out, domestic and sexual violence service providers will do all they can to help the victim develop a plan to stay as safe as possible. For some women and children in the Portland metro region, that may mean riding the MAX line all night or sleeping at the

airport. In rural areas, the safest option may be for a victim to sleep in her car or camp at the beach or in the woods. We can only guess how many of the 20,000-plus unmet requests for shelter left victims with no choice but to return to a violent home.

Shelter, safety and support services to prevent crime and to help victims become survivors are a vital element of a successful public safety system. Once Oregon makes these services one of our highest priorities, we will see more Oregonians possess the foundation they need to succeed.

Finding the funding needed for victims' services can come from enacting safe and sensible public safety reforms that control prison growth and costs. Oregon is on track to fund 2,000 additional prison beds over the next decade—at the cost of \$600 million more dollars. This would further unbalance Oregon's public safety system and would mean even fewer resources for victims seeking help. The Commission on Public Safety recommended modest policy changes that would flatline prison growth while holding people who commit crime accountable, reducing the amount of money spent on corrections and reinvesting a portion of this into victims' services.

Oregon has important decisions to make. We can prevent crime and invest in more shelter beds rather than more prison beds. By doing this, we can make individuals, families, and communities throughout Oregon safer, stronger, and healthier.

Partnership for Safety and Justice urges you to support a \$4 million increase to ODSVS.