



Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 5018
For the Public Safety Ways and Means Subcommittee
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Presented by:

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This testimony is presented in support of HB 5018

Sexual Assault Task Force Background

In July 1999, former Attorney General Hardy Myers responded to requests from victim advocates, law enforcement, prosecutors and other allied professionals to organize a statewide effort to address sexual assault in Oregon; the Task Force was subsequently formed. The Task Force is comprised of more than 100 appointed and volunteer members. The Task Force works to develop and support an effective, consistent and collaborative approach to the response to and reduction of adult and adolescent sexual assault in Oregon. This work is accomplished through statewide leadership; the offering of high-quality training for responders and other professionals; information and technical assistance; policy efforts in the interests of sexual assault victims, responders and the community; funding local prevention efforts; providing infrastructure and support for the Oregon SANE Commission; and developing, publishing and disseminating resources and materials for responders, prevention and education workers, and other professionals.

Increase in funding to sustain Critical Services

The SATF is pleased to support the budget of the Crime Victims' Services Division in Department of Justice.

Specifically, the SATF adds its voice to the growing number of partners requesting an **increase of \$4 million dollars** in critical **General Fund** dollars for sexual and domestic violence services through the **Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund (ODSVS)**.

Oregon's commitment to consistent and sustainable funding for victim services vitally important to the safety of some of the state's most vulnerable citizens. Oregon sexual violence and domestic violence programs rely on a combination of federal, state and local funds. The great recession has been particularly hard on fundraising opportunities for non-profits, stretching domestic and sexual violence services funds to the limit and in some cases, forcing them to downsize or close. In addition, the federal funds that are used to augment state funds are instable and inconsistent. Congress has taken over a year to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and its future is still in the balance. The federal Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) fund has been used as a budgetary offse to literally balance the federal budget on the backs of victims while holding over \$8 billion dollars dedicated only to victim services hostage when it could be coming to Oregon to distribute to local programs. The looming sequestration could result in a loss of thousands of



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dollars for Oregon and casts a shadow over future grant allocations. Federal funds are also often non renewable and come with extremely restrictive and onerous reporting requirements further limiting their usefulness as sustaining funding. ODSVS is the most relevant and flexible funding source for local programs, allowing them to keep their doors open to victims. Now more than ever, domestic and sexual violence victims in Oregon rely on the public's commitment to ODSVS funding in order to sustain existing services. From its inception ODSVS was intended to and has served as a safety net for its service providers in Oregon.

Further, ODSVS funding is leveraged to win grants, pilot new services and pair with local fundraising contributing to a more stable and diversified funding strategy for local service programs. In addition, providing accessible services for victims of sexual and domestic violence has a ripple effect, reducing the cost of health care, child welfare and the criminal justice system.

Oregon is stronger when victims and families are safe

- Domestic violence services reduce re-assault by up to 70%.
- Safety from domestic and sexual violence would
 - save Oregon more than \$50 million per year in related costs.
 - reduce 1/3 of child welfare cases in Oregon
 - save \$9.3 million in annual lost earnings, and prevent a leading cause of homelessness for women children.
- Approximately one in five homicides in Oregon was related to domestic violence between 2003 and 2009
 - Over 40 Oregonians were killed by domestic violence in Oregon in 2012
 - Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault are critical public health and safety issues

The fabric of services to victims of crime in Oregon is tightly woven and relies on close local collaboration and coordination. The crossover of victims utilizing services from sexual and domestic violence non-profits, child abuse intervention programs and prosecutor based victim assistance programs is frequent. Adequate funding for all local victim services is vital to ensure victim safety for sexual and domestic violence victims, collection of evidence and advocacy for child abuse victims, and affording victims' rights and assistance through prosecution of the offender for all victims of crime.

To that end, in addition to supporting a **\$4 million increase in ODSVS**, the Sexual Assault Task Force also strongly supports an **increase in Criminal Fine funding of \$2 million to the Prosecutor-Based Victim Assistance Programs (VAPs) and the Child Abuse Intervention programs through the Child Abuse Multidisciplinary Intervention fund (CAMI).**

As the legislature considers possible avenues for justice reform and reinvestment, the SATF strongly recommends funding for these vital local services to victims.