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We believe that everyone deserves to live a life free from violence.

February 27, 2013

Co-chair Williamson, Co-chair Winters, Sen. Devlin, Sen. Whitsett, Rep. Barker and Rep. Hanna:

Thank you for your time and consideration. I offer this testimony in support of an increase in funding to the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund, a part of the Department of Justice Budget Bill (HB 5018).

Domestic and sexual violence affect everyone. Whether we've encountered it directly or it has happened to a friend, a family member, a neighbor, or a colleague, the impact of violence is something that reverberates through our entire community. In the media, on the street, or reflected by drop-out rates, low test scores in schools, the prevalence of homelessness or drug and alcohol addiction, we see how the effects of trauma tear apart people's lives. It is our responsibility to address this pervasive, dangerous public health issue in the most steadfast way possible.

In a comprehensive national survey of children's exposure to violence, researchers found that children are more likely to be exposed to violence and crime than adults. Intimate partner violence was found to be the most prevalent form of violence exposure. Furthermore, children who are exposed to violence at least once are more likely to continue being exposed to more types of violence throughout their lifetimes.¹ Exposure to trauma at a young age, coupled with experiences of other forms of toxic stress, such as poverty and historical trauma (legacies of living with racism, sexism, homophobia, etc), directly and negatively impact childhood development. Something is wrong when in 2013 we are still unable to adequately address and prevent children from being exposed to and experiencing violence.

Funding for domestic and sexual violence programs does not simply provide for the immediate and basic needs of people who are currently in crisis because of their exposure to trauma. Survivors of domestic and sexual violence are intimately acquainted with every social service system, from self-sufficiency, to child welfare, to education, to healthcare, to housing, to criminal justice, to mental health, to addiction services. Those who serve survivors of trauma know how interconnected all of these systems are for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. We work across systems to ensure they are trauma-informed and effectively serving everyone who needs to access them. An increase in funding to the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund is not just a way of addressing the direct needs of agencies who respond to these issues, but a way of recognizing and identifying the pervasiveness of violence. Passing this budget increase

¹ Finkelhor, D., Ormrod, R.K., Turner, H.A., and Hamby, S.L. 2005. The victimization of children and youth: A comprehensive, national survey. *Child Maltreatment* 10(1):5-25.

helps to recognize the impact violence has on our entire community and all of the systems within it.

Despite the work of domestic and sexual violence advocates to address the impact of trauma in every aspect of our support and social service systems, these essential programs are woefully under-funded. For many years, funding for domestic and sexual violence programs has stagnated, seeing no increases despite increases in the cost of executing these programs efficiently and effectively. As domestic and sexual violence service providers, we have learned over time to consistently do more with less: operating shelters, hotlines and education programs that serve huge populations in our state without the state making it a priority to provide adequate compensation. We struggle and operate from a place of scarcity. We support survivors of trauma, while ourselves experiencing the fear and trauma that we might have to close or cut the already limited services we provide. It's time for the state to step up and support these vital programs, to recognize their importance to every piece of our system, and to make funding domestic and sexual violence services a priority.

I hope you will be compelled to pass this budget increase with haste. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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