



2013 Oregon Women's Health and Wellness Alliance



Testimony in Support of Increased Funding for the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence
Services Fund

Testimony to the Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee
February 27, 2013

Co-chairs Winters and Williamson and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing us the opportunity to submit testimony today on behalf of the Oregon Women's Health and Wellness Alliance. Together, we co-chair the Oregon Women's Health and Wellness Alliance, a bipartisan group of legislators, health care personnel, state and local agency staff and citizen advocates dedicated to promoting the health, safety and economic well-being of women. Each session, the group puts together a priority list of legislation that members agree are vital to supporting Oregon's women and the funding for the Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund is one of our priority items this session.

Created in 2001, the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund provides emergency shelter, expert safety planning, counseling, and other support services to victims fleeing domestic and sexual violence in every county across the state. This Fund is the only source of general fund support for these life-saving services and we appreciate the state's support of these important programs. However, the total state and federal funding available in Oregon currently meets less than half of the minimum core emergency need. In 2011, there were more than 20,000 requests for emergency shelter that could not be met in the state.

We know the need is there and we know that this Fund provide necessary services to victims of domestic and sexual assault. More than 85,000 Oregon women report having been physically or sexually assaulted by an intimate or recently intimate partner in the last five years and we know that access to victim safety services reduces the incidence of re-assault by 70%. Therefore, we support the request to increase funding to the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund by \$4 million over the Governor's Recommended Budget to stabilize access to critical services for victims and their children in communities across Oregon. Oregon is stronger when victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and their families are safe.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward

Representative Sara Gelsler