

Mid-Valley Women's  
Crisis Service



Serving Victims and Survivors of  
Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault,  
Stalking & Human Trafficking  
Since 1973

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Chair Barker, Vice-Chair Garrett, Vice-Chair Kreiger, and members of the committee,

My name is Kirstin Heydel and I am the Youth Services Coordinator for Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service. Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service (MVWCS) serves victims and survivors of teen dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking in Marion County. Since 1973, Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service has provided hope and safety to victims and survivors affected by all forms of abuse. I, along with other advocates from MVWCS, believe that the passage of HB 2779 will benefit many victims across the state of Oregon and the clients MVWCS serves.

As an advocate I have worked with too many survivors who desperately needed a protective order such as the one proposed in HB 2779. Fifty-four percent of sexual assaults go unreported according to a statistical average of the past five years. Factoring in unreported rapes only about 3% of perpetrators will ever spend a day in jail. A recent study conducted by the centers of disease control found that 56% of women in Oregon have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. There needs to be further surveying to distinguish whether the sexual violence occurred in Oregon or another state. Regardless, 56% is too high. This statistic ranks Oregon as number 2 in the nation for the highest amount of victims of sexual violence.

One young woman I was working with was sexually assaulted by a classmate in college. She was severely traumatized by the event. Every day at school she would have to sit in classes with him. The stress of having to see him every day led to her dropping out of college and moving back home. Had this victim been able to attain a sexual assault protective order this victim might still be in school.

Another young woman I worked with had been sexually abused by her father as a child into her teen years. Her experience with the criminal justice system was not positive and her family was not supportive of her, nor did they believe her. A young man at her school gained her trust and she disclosed the abuse to him. After that he violently sexually assaulted her. This continued for six months. She did not want to report the abuse because he was very popular and because she had been abused before. She was afraid no one would believe her because of the past abuse, and unfortunately this is true for so many victims.

House Bill 2779 is significant because every person deserves to live a life free of violence and the daily fear of seeing someone who perpetrated an unspeakable crime against them. It is important this legislation passes as too many women in Oregon experience sexual violence in their lifetime. Passing HB 2779 would send a clear message to victims and survivors that legislators support and value those who have suffered and are still suffering.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about the impact this legislation would have on victims and survivors.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kirstin Heydel, Youth Services Coordinator