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

February 19, 2015

Testimony submitted by:  
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Submitted to:  
Senate Human Services and Early Childhood Committee  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE, Room B  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Gelser and Members of the Human Services and Early Childhood Committee,

Thank you for your time. I offer this testimony in support Senate Bill 503 to increase the funding of the TA-DVS Grant.

I am Christina McGovney, Shelter Coordinator at Raphael House of Portland, a multi-faceted domestic violence agency dedicated to fighting the causes and effects of intimate partner violence, including sexual violence. We offer an emergency shelter in a confidential location with a base stay of 30 days, safety planning and advocacy, housing and advocacy services to survivors, and extensive follow up services.

Many survivors come through our emergency shelter program have needed help from the TA-DVS Program for crucial and, at times, life-saving assistance. Accessing the TA-DVS Grant is often a huge relief for families coming through our shelter. Survivors often times experience economic abuse which prevents them from being able to acquire any savings to be able to pay to move to a new place. Many other survivors have been out of the work force so long it makes getting a job all the more difficult, and this makes the TA-DVS program all the more crucial when they are trying to escape abuse.

Deposits can be extremely high, and the market is incredibly tight. Because of domestic violence, survivors often have poor rental history. However, we work tirelessly with landlords to find housing for victims, and many landlords go out of their way to help out. However, the apartment management companies and landlords often require large deposits ranging from \$1500-2000 for those survivors with higher barriers to housing. Many times, we see survivors use their entire TA-DVS Grant on their deposit, and still have to come up with additional funds to cover the full deposit, and this leaves no other financial resources for much beyond the deposit itself.



**RAPHAEL HOUSE**  
of PORTLAND

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Many families come to mind that experience similar hardships over finances related to housing costs. One family specifically comes to mind. Jennifer and her two children were accepted into a housing program, and they began their apartment search. Jennifer had acquired a lot of debt due to the abusive situation, her credit was destroyed, and she had an eviction that was tied to the domestic violence. We advocated that the eviction be removed from consideration due to the domestic violence, but the other barriers remained high. She finally had a landlord agree to accept her into their apartments, on the condition that she pays a higher deposit to compensate for the risk the management company was taking. The deposit the landlord required was \$1700. She used her entire TA-DVS Grant on the deposit, and still had to come up with an additional \$500 dollars. Luckily in her case we were able to work with another housing program to be able to access funds which allowed her to pay the entire deposit and move in. This is just one example of many.

There are only 32 domestic violence shelter spaces available in Multnomah County and they are most often at capacity. Survivors may end up using a portion of their TA-DVS Grant to pay for a motel for a few nights while they are hoping to access shelter space, which results in even less funds to be able to move into safe housing. Or survivors may have to choose between more money for a motel or a deposit fee and paying the first month for a storage unit so they do not lose all of their family photos and memorabilia. Survivors are faced with extremely difficult and life changing choices at every turn. Access to safe housing is an essential component to being able to work towards becoming independent. It is incredibly challenging for a survivor to focus on moving forward when they do not have their most basic needs met, and this is all in addition to attempting to recover from the trauma they have experienced due to abuse. We strongly believe that every person deserves a life free from violence, and the TA-DVS Grant is a valuable tool in working towards that goal.

Therefore, I strongly support of increasing the TA-DVS Grant from \$1200 up to \$2000. The grant was originally established in 1996 and we know that the cost of housing and living has increased since its original implementation. As outlined in the examples I mentioned, this simply does not cover the entirety of what is needed for survivors to move into safe housing. I hope, given my testimony and the testimony of others here today that you will be compelled to increase the funding to continue to promote safer communities for all.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Christina McGovney