



Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force

TESTIMONY in Support of SB 503
Submitted to the Senate Judiciary Committee
Submitted by: Michele Roland-Schwartz, Executive Director

February 19, 2015

Chair Gelser, and members of the Committee,

My name is Michele Roland-Schwartz and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force. The Sexual Assault Task Force is a private, non-profit, non-governmental statewide agency whose mission is to *facilitate and support a victim-centered approach to the prevention of and response to adolescent and adult sexual violence through multi-disciplinary collaboration*. The Task Force is comprised of over 100 appointed Oregonians representing a wide array of local and statewide community partners, including: victim advocates, violence prevention educators, medical professionals, law enforcement and criminal justice practitioners, policy makers, youth, and survivors of sexual violence.

SB 503, Closing the Gap in Emergency Assistance Coverage for Sexual Assault Victims

I submit this testimony on behalf of the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force in support of SB 503, which would close the gap in emergency assistance for sexual assault victims.

The immediate needs of a victim following a sexual assault include access to information about the options available to them, whether legal, medical, or support services. Victims are better able to navigate their options if they have safety measures in place that allow short term and long term stability, increasing the likelihood that victims will seek other critical services to address their needs. Access to emergency transportation, shelter, security locks, lock changes and other emergency expenses increase safety and provide victims with a strong foundation for healing.

Sexual assault often occurs in or near victims' homes or the homes of friends, family, or acquaintances.¹ Perpetrators are often known to the victim and may be intimate or non-intimate partners. As a result, "home" may not be a safe place after a sexual assault. Barriers to emergency safety provisions only serves to compound the emotional trauma experienced by victims, a consequence we have the opportunity to prevent if we close the gap in emergency assistance to sexual assault victims.

¹ Kris Bein and Christi Hurt. *NSVRC: Strong Foundation for Healing: Shelter and Sexual Violence*. 2011. Retrieved from, http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications_RSP_Strong-foundation-for-healing-shelter-and-sexual-violence.pdf



Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force

Passing SB 503 will extend an important remedy to victims of sexual assault, positively impacting their immediate and long-term safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michele Roland-Schwartz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Michele Roland-Schwartz
Executive Director