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

March 3, 2015

Testimony submitted by:

Christina McGovney
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4110 SE Hawthorne Blvd. #503
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Submitted to:

Joint Ways and Means Human Services Subcommittee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, Room F
Salem, Oregon 97301

Co-Chairs Bates and Nathanson, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for your time. I offer this testimony in support of increased funding for two programs critical to domestic violence survivors and their children in the Department of Human Services Budget.

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.

Temporary Assistance to Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS): Many survivors coming through our emergency shelter program have needed help from the TA-DVS Program for crucial and, at times, life-saving assistance. 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. The TA-DVS program can help pay for up to \$1200 in one-time safety or relocations costs when home is no longer safe for the victim and children.

However, this program now provides less help than it used to. The grant was originally established in 1996 and we know that the cost of housing and living has increased since its original implementation. Deposits can be extremely high, and the rental market is

incredibly tight. 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. 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.

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 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



March 2, 2015

Co-Chairs Bates and Nathanson and members of the Subcommittee on Human Services:

As the executive director of the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, I am writing to express my strong support for the full implementation of the Co-Located Advocate Program and for increased funding for TA-DVS.

The Oregon Coalition has served survivors of domestic and sexual violence in this state and the programs and advocates that support them since 1978. Coordinated response across agencies is a critical element of the safety net that we strive to provide on a daily basis, and co-located advocates are an important element of this network. Advocacy program staff, DHS employees, and survivors and their children reap the benefits of increased communication, training, and understanding that these relationships create. I urge you to move forward in implementing the best practice Co-Located Advocate Program to its fullest extent.

Further, survivors of sexual assault in this state endure many of the same struggles to attain safety and security that domestic violence survivors do. The financial burden of escaping abuse and becoming safe can be insurmountable when you have few resources. Therefore, I also urge you to increase the TA-DVS one-time emergency assistance funding limit and make these funds available to survivors of sexual assault.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vanessa Timmons". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vanessa Timmons
Executive Director



**201 W. Main St. #3D
Medford, OR 97501
(541) 779-2393**

Dear Co-Chairs Bates and Nathanson, and members of the Joint Subcommittee on Human Services:

Thank you for this opportunity to express our views on 2 programs critical to vulnerable populations in the DHS budget: the Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS) Program and the DHS funded Domestic Violence Specialists in Child Welfare and Self Sufficiency Offices across Oregon. I am the Program Manager for Outreach Services at Community Works serving Jackson County and we are the state designated victim services provider for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking in Jackson County.

Our agency has been fortunate to have long term partnerships with Child Welfare and Self Sufficiency. These partnerships are vital to survivors who find themselves working with DHS systems. We currently have two advocates working at Self Sufficiency office through the Co-Located advocate program, and through SB 964 have two advocates in a partnership with Child Welfare and On-Track who are housed at DHS Child Welfare.

When a survivor of domestic violence or sexual assault reaches out for services the Community Works advocates help to bridge communication and connections with DHS workers, and can provide safety planning and ongoing support. Through resources that Community Works has we can help with client assistance such as a cell phone, diapers, clothes, etc. Our emergency shelter, Dunn House, provides housing and support services for adult and child victims. The Outreach advocates work closely with the DHS workers which enhances the services of both agencies and especially benefits the survivor. Navigating multiple systems is complex and the advocates can intervene to help make the processes smoother. Providing safety and support services to the adult victim of domestic violence makes it more likely that children can be safe in stable and self-sufficient homes.

Our Co-located DV advocates are busy! Jackson County has high rates of domestic violence and has had 11 domestic violence homicides in the last 4 years. We need the legislature to fully fund the DHS Co-located advocacy program so services can be available when needed.

The other topic we want to address is the TA-DVS Program. SB 503 would expand that critical program to include sexual assault survivors and would increase the amount available for this emergency grant to \$2,000. There is currently no assistance for a sexual assault survivor, which leaves victims in fear and sometimes homeless. And the reality in Jackson County and many other communities is that the \$1,200 cap is not enough to get a survivor in to safe and stable housing away from the abuser. Most landlords ask for a deposit and first month's rent in order to move in. The cost of housing in the county is high; the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2014 report states that in Oregon, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$846. Many survivors have poor credit because of the tactics of abuse the perpetrator uses – not paying the bills, withholding her paycheck, causing damage to the property, etc. The impact on victims is that they are then seen as high risk renters and deposits can be double what others pay.

Domestic violence programs across the state as well as supporters have a goal to end violence against women and children. In order to do this, we have to deal with the realities of survivors needs. Community Works urges you to fully fund the DHS Co-Located Advocacy Program and SB 503.

Sincerely,
Gerry Sea
Program Manager
Dunn House Outreach
Community Works
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Increased funding for the TA-DVS Program in the Department of Human Services Budget

SB 503

Close the Gap in Emergency Assistance for Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Survivors

Current Law:

The Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors program (TA-DVS), established in Oregon in 1996, provides critical one-time emergency assistance of up to \$1200 to low-income survivors of domestic violence seeking safety for themselves and their children. The program can pay for emergency transportation, motel vouchers, security locks, lock changes, clothing for a family who had to flee abuse, and other emergency expenses. Payments are made to third party vendors, for safety-related emergency services for the survivor. The program saves lives by making it possible for victims with children to escape immediate danger.

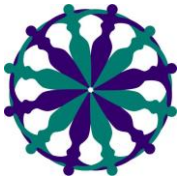
What are the Gaps?

- **Survivors of sexual assault are not eligible for this life-saving assistance, but should be.**
 - Victims of sexual assault suffer similar safety risks and have similar emergency needs as victims of domestic violence.
 - 1 in 6 Oregon women has been a victim of forcible rape in her lifetime.
 - Emergency assistance otherwise available to a domestic violence survivor should not be denied a low-income sexual assault victim just because her attacker was not a family member.
- **The amount of allowable assistance now covers fewer emergency needs.**
 - When the TA-DVS program was first established, in 1996, emergency payments of up to \$1,200 were authorized.
 - At that time, this amount was sufficient to pay for moving costs and first month's rent for a survivor who needed to flee the home because of safety threats. This is no longer the case.
 - Increasing the allowable assistance amount to \$2,000 would better allow the program to fulfill its purpose of helping survivors with children achieve safety.

What is the Request?

- **Allow sexual assault survivors to access the TA-DVS program.**
- **Increase the one-time emergency assistance limit from \$1,200 to \$2,000, to better allow the program to fulfill its safety purpose.**

SB 503 Closes the Gap in Emergency Assistance for Survivors



Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women

SB 5026 Full Funding for Domestic Violence Specialists in DHS Offices \$3.2 million increase

Summary: Placement of domestic violence specialists in child welfare and self-sufficiency offices is a best practice model to help with child abuse and self-sufficiency cases involving domestic violence. These specialists provide in-depth safety planning, education, advocacy and on-going support to adult domestic violence victims, and support & consultation to DHS caseworkers creating case plans involving victims and perpetrators. This program was partially funded in the 2011 legislature, and where available, these services have helped victims and caseworkers find real solutions. Increased funding is necessary to fully implement the program.

Who: Victims of domestic violence, and their children, who have been referred to the child welfare or self-sufficiency system.

Background: Where domestic violence is present in the home, it must be identified and addressed before a child welfare case can be resolved. Victims cannot be self-sufficient and support their children if they are not safe. Providing support to adult victims of domestic violence and holding batterers accountable for the violence is necessary to enhance safety and self-sufficiency for both child and adult victims. DHS caseworkers cannot be safety-planning or domestic violence experts, and are often challenged in responding to the intense needs of victim clients. Coordination between domestic violence experts and caseworkers is a vital part of helping families avoid foster care and achieve safety and self-sufficiency.

Fact: Domestic violence is a safety threat in approximately 32% of child abuse cases in Oregon, and in approximately 1/3 of self-sufficiency cases.

Fact: Research shows that there is a correlation between domestic violence and child fatalities, and that domestic violence is an indicator of severe child abuse.

Fact: Providing safety and support services to the adult victim of domestic violence makes it more likely that children can be safe in stable and self-sufficient homes.

Fact: In pilot projects where domestic violence specialists were present, DHS caseworkers reported that:

- * Victim parents had better access to services, were more likely to successfully deal with their experience of violence, and were better able to create safety plans for their children; and
- * Caseworkers were better able to keep children safely with their parent, rather than placing them in foster care.

Fact: Location of domestic violence specialists in child welfare and self-sufficiency offices is a nationally recognized best practice.