



Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force

TESTIMONY in Support of HB 5026
Submitted to the Joint Subcommittee on Human Services
Submitted by: Michele Roland-Schwartz, Executive Director

March 3, 2015

Chairs Bates and Nathanson, 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: community and systems-based advocates, violence prevention educators, law enforcement, medical professionals, criminal justice system practitioners, policy makers, youth, and survivors of sexual violence.

I submit this testimony on behalf of the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force in support of HB 5026, which would ensure self-sufficiency funding under Department of Human Services, specifically Temporary Assistance to Domestic Violence Survivors Program (TA-DVS). The Sexual Assault Task Force testified in support of SB 503, which would expand TA-DVS to survivors of sexual assault.

The TA-DVS program provides critical assistance to domestic violence survivors with children who need help fleeing violence. Access to emergency funds allows victims the ability to put safety measures in place, increasing their short term and long term stability. When survivors have safety measures in place, they are more likely to address the immediate legal and medical needs following an assault, are more likely to engage in support services that mitigate the trauma they've experienced, and are better able to protect their children. This program has worked well to help many victims of domestic violence and their children escape abuse, and we urge expanded funding so that the program can help more victims in need.

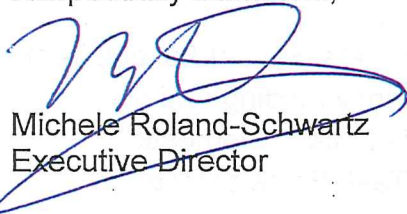
Specifically, we hope the program can be expanded to include sexual assault victims. Sexual assault often occurs in or near victims' homes or the homes of friends, family, or acquaintances. Perpetrators are often known to the victim and may be intimate or non-intimate partners. As a result, "home" may not be a safe place after a sexual assault. Access to emergency transportation, shelter, security locks, lock changes and other emergency expenses provide victims with a strong foundation for healing.

Barriers to emergency safety provisions only serves to compound the emotional trauma experienced by victims and their children, a consequence we have the opportunity to prevent if we close the gap in emergency assistance to sexual assault victims.

Passing HB 5026, and ultimately increasing funding to extend TA-DVS services to victims of sexual assault, will positively impact the immediate and long term safety of victims and the children in their care.

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,



Michele Roland-Schwartz
Executive Director