

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 3476

Submitted to the House Judiciary Committee

By Kerry Naughton, Crime Survivors Program Director, Partnership for Safety and Justice

March 25, 2015

Chair Barker, Vice-Chair Williamson, Vice-Chair Olson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kerry Naughton and I am the Crime Survivors Program Director at Partnership for Safety and Justice. Partnership of Safety and Justice is a statewide, non-profit organization that has worked in Oregon for 15 years. We are focused on creating a public safety and criminal justice system that works for everyone. We believe that effective public safety requires being smart about crime by putting accountability first, providing crime survivors with the services they need, and supporting proven strategies to prevent future violence.

These values drive our work, which is why Partnership for Safety and Justice supports HB 3476. HB 3476 would give victims of domestic and sexual violence and stalking the ability to safely access the help that they need. Oregon needs HB 3476 so that survivors will get the help they need to rebuild their lives. When survivors learn that their communication with advocates can be shared without their permission, survivors might not seek help; might not disclose the full extent of the harm committed against them; and might stay in unsafe situations.

I've worked with victims of crime for the past 16 years, helping people process the psychological impact that comes from physical and sexual harm. The trauma that survivors experience is unexpected and overwhelming. Survivors often experience a combination of confusion, anger, sorrow, guilt, numbness, feeling unsafe, and fear that people won't believe the survivor or will blame the survivor for the harm that was done to them. This leads to the survivor feeling like she or he isn't in control—not only of their life experiences, but of their responses to life experiences. One survivor I worked with said she felt like the ball in a pinball machine—zooming around intense and complicated emotions, not sure which one she'd land on next.

As disruptive and overwhelming as the psychological impact of crime is, it is the brain's natural way to try to make sense out of something that seems unthinkable. And, with assistance, survivors are able to work through the impact of the trauma and live full, happy lives. Often, the first step to working through the trauma is disclosing the harm and violence to someone who can be trusted and who will have an appropriate, survivor-centered and trauma-informed response. That's why HB 3476 is so important for survivors—it's imperative that Oregon provides safe, confidential support that survivors can trust.

Forty states provide some protection to communications and records made in the course of providing counseling, advocacy, support, and safety services to victims. It's time for Oregon to join these other states by passing HB 3476. We hope you'll join us in supporting HB 3476.