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Testimony in Support of SB 759A
Before the House Committee on Higher Education, Innovation & Workforce Development
May 4th, 2015
Submitted by Sybil Hebb

Chair Read, Vice-chairs Gallegos and Whisnant, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 759A, which would require Oregon's universities to adopt written protocols to ensure students who are victims of sexual assault receive necessary services, assistance, and information. This bill will help our college campuses take an important step forward in ensuring safety and protection for victims of sexual violence on campus.

OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income vulnerable populations. A significant number of our clients come to us for help as they are struggling to escape or recover from domestic violence. Domestic and sexual violence are serious public health and safety issues in our state. Victims suffer great psychological, emotional, and physical trauma, which have long term impact on their lives. College-age women are at heightened risk of assault and abuse. At a time in their lives when the trajectory should be soaring, the ramifications of assault can send victims plummeting into a spiral. Domestic and sexual violence greatly contribute to the vulnerability of our clients, and further trap them in poverty and crisis. OLC is committed to supporting the coordinated community response necessary to help prevent this violence, and to helping victims in crisis move towards the safety and stability they need for recovery.

SB 759A will ensure that any student who reports a sexual assault receives accurate and plain-language information about where to get help, and about what privacy protections they can expect when they seek help. The bill will also ensure that students who are victims receive information about what their rights and options are, should they choose to move forward with a campus or law enforcement investigation. This information is critical to allowing victims to make informed decisions in the aftermath of an assault, and will facilitate the accessing of safety services that can help victims recover from the assault.

This bill is one important step forward in ensuring that our campuses are safe places for learning and growing. SB 759A will help students, campuses, and communities by improving the response to sexual assault on campus.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your Aye vote. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.