



May 13, 2015

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Kruse, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is BB Beltran and I am the Executive Director of Sexual Assault Support Services (SASS); SASS is a non-profit organization providing outreach, advocacy and support to survivors of sexual violence and their partners, families and friends throughout Eugene-Springfield and the rest of Lane County. SASS advocates listen, believe, support, accompany, offer information and referrals, and provide peer counseling to survivors of sexual violence, past and present. We maintain a 24-hour crisis and support line and provide 24-hour emergency advocacy for survivors of sexual assault and sexual abuse. Although we serve all of Lane County, due to our proximity to the University of Oregon and Lane Community College, many of the survivors we work with are students.

Privacy and confidentiality are vital to survivors of sexual violence, especially in tight knit communities like college campuses or rural areas which make up the bulk of Lane County. Violations to privacy and confidentiality have a ripple effect that not only impact the individual survivor by potentially compromising their safety, but also the community at large by creating distrust. If there are no assurances of privacy and confidentiality survivors may not access services to receive the support they deserve.

Sexual assault is never the survivor's fault, however, we live in a society which oftentimes stigmatizes and blames the victim and this message is internalized by survivors. Private and confidential advocacy services are important in disrupting the cycle of self-blame and putting the onus back on perpetrators where it rightly belongs. SASS advocates work from an empowerment based approach and provide information and options rather than advice. We believe survivors are in the best position to determine what is right for their situation. Privacy and confidentiality are necessary to provide survivors a safe space to explore their options in their own time.

HB 3476 would provide assurances of privacy and confidentiality that survivors need to access advocacy services. If the Oregon legislature is serious about creating safer communities, being responsive to the needs of survivors and reducing sexual violence then HB 3476 is an essential step to achieve those goals.

Sincerely,

BB Beltran
Executive Director
Sexual Assault Support Services (SASS)