

Kate Brown
Governor



Oregon Commission for Women
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Testimony in Support of SB 1571
February 2, 2016, HR 343, 9:05 am
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Kruse, and Senators Gelser, Thatcher, and President Pro Tempore Rosenbaum:

The Oregon Commission for Women, in its role of advocate for the women of Oregon, strongly supports SB 1571.

The OCFW observes that over the years, and not only in Oregon, the evidence of sexual assault has been treated more cavalierly and neglectfully than evidence of any other crime. Sexual assault evidence kits languish in storage while perpetrators walk free and victims are denied justice.

SB 1571 helps to remedy this problem. It introduces accountability for the testing of sexual assault kits, tightens timelines and regularizes the handling and retention of such kits, makes law enforcement agencies more responsive to sexual assault victims, and applies to every law enforcement agency in the state. It requires annual reporting on the kit testing and backlog of each such agency, and further, that DNA from the kits be submitted when possible to the national Combined DNA Index System (CODIS).

SB 1571 also creates a multidisciplinary task force to oversee and seek non-taxpayer funding for the state's efforts to improve its performance, and to report back to the Legislature by a specific date.

The victims of sexual assault are overwhelmingly female. The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) estimates that one out of every six women has been the victim of a completed or attempted rape. RAINN also estimates that 15% of all victims are under age 12. SB 1571 will improve the quality of justice for all victims.

The Oregon Commission for Women urges an Aye vote on SB 1571.
Sincerely,

Stephanie Vardavas, Commissioner, Oregon Commission for Women

OR Commission for Women

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