

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 496
Submitted to the Senate Judiciary Committee
By Shannon Wight, Deputy Director, Partnership for Safety and Justice
March 8, 2017

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shannon Wight and I am the Deputy Director at Partnership for Safety and Justice. We are a statewide, non-profit organization that has worked in Oregon since 1999. We advance policy solutions to crime that ensure justice, equity, accountability, and healing to achieve safe and strong communities.

Those values drive our work, which is why I offer testimony in support of SB 496. A justice system lacking transparency or accountability in due process doesn't serve crime survivors or those who have caused harm.

We are supporting this bill because we believe it will protect the rights of victims, help create greater trust in our criminal justice system and provide needed transparency for all impacted by crime.

This bill creates safeguards to the confidentiality of crime victims by protecting information shared during deliberations and votes of grand juries. Records would also be exempt from public record laws. SB 496 proposes that hearsay statements for minor victims should be allowed, which provide protections for children who might be re-traumatized by having to come to court.

The creation of a verbatim record of grand jury hearings brings accountability and transparency to a process that bears profound impact on the lives of those accused, the lives of those harmed and the larger community.

Please support SB 496 to help bring Oregon into line with other states that recognize the importance of creating a record of one of the most critical moments in the criminal justice process.