



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 9, 2017

TO: Honorable Jeff Barker, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Shannon Sivell, Crime Victims' Services Division,
Oregon Department of Justice

SUBJECT: HB 2621 – Relating to Crime Victim Compensation Program

This testimony is presented in support of HB 2621.

BACKGROUND

Oregon's Crime Victims' Compensation program was created in 1978 to provide victims of violent crime with financial support for medical, counseling and other expenses that are incurred as a result of a criminal event. Like Oregon, all 50 states have compensation programs which are funded through a combination of state and federal funds. DOJ regularly consults with other states, victim rights attorneys and victim advocates to strengthen Oregon's compensation program policies and corresponding administrative rules. In recent years, CVSD has taken strides to increase accessibility to the program and make the program more victim-centered. CVSD recognizes how trauma upsets and temporarily overwhelms victims' internal resources¹, leaving victims emotionally and economically vulnerable.² For this reason, the proposed changes in HB 2621 are necessary to ensure that Oregon's Crime Victims' Compensation program remains a valuable resource for victims and their families in the aftermath of a traumatic event.

CONCEPT

The purpose of HB 2621 is to expand reporting options for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking and to increase access to domestic violence and sexual assault counseling services. HB 2621 does this by clarifying the existing statutory language, codifying long standing practices already established through administrative rule and creating limited benefits for victims who may not otherwise qualify for Crime Victims' Compensation. The key provisions of HB 2621 ensure that our state statute reflects a victim-centered compensation program.

¹ Briere, J. (2006). Dissociative symptoms and trauma exposure: Specificity, affect dysregulation, and posttraumatic stress. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 194, 78-82.

² <https://victimsofcrime.org/help-for-crime-victims/get-help-bulletins-for-crime-victims/trauma-of-victimization>

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HB 2621 also expands economic support for those who have lost earnings as a result of a crime and gives CVSD additional tools for making determinations about the compensation of crime victims.

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