



March 9, 2017

To: Rep. Jeff Barker, Chair
Rep. Andy Olsen, Vice-Chair
Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, Vice-Chair

CC: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2621

The Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (OCADSV) advocates on behalf of 50+ tribal and community based, non-profit domestic and sexual violence programs. We support your local programs by providing technical assistance, community education, training in prevention, and supporting coordinated emergency medical and legal response to these extremely personal crimes. We strive to ensure that the voices of domestic and sexual violence survivors are heard, and that the experiences of survivors inform both the work we do – and the work you are doing today. Thank you for your willingness to listen to our testimony regarding the importance of passing HB 2621 strengthen and improve domestic and sexual survivors ability to access compensation for the crimes that they have survived.

Oregon is second in the nation in rates of sexual and/or domestic assault. 37% of women and 34% of men in Oregon reported t having experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking at some point in their lifetime. It is critical that ORS 147.367, Services to Victims of Acts of Mass Destruction, be amended to take into consideration the unique circumstances of domestic and sexual violence survivors.

Crimes of domestic and sexual assault create more than just physical trauma. They often require a survivor and their dependents to immediately find new housing, file protective orders, find new

employment and seek professional mental health support. HB 2621 strengthens the ability of a survivor to receive compensation by clarifying and simplifying the actions necessary to file for compensation

- HB 2621 provides an important clarification of the meaning of “good cause” for a survivor not notifying law enforcement. In the aftermath of an incident, a domestic or sexual assault survivor must often consider more immediate needs.
- HB 2621 clearly defines a protective order, a sexual assault medical assessment and/or a preliminary police report as an appropriate notification of law enforcement to qualify for compensation. Each of these actions requires significant time and focus and provide ample information upon which to make a judgement about a survivor’s eligibility for compensation. This clarification removes a potential additional burden upon the survivor.
- HB 2621 makes progress on improving the states support for domestic and sexual survivors by increasing potential compensation for lost wages from \$400 to \$600 per week. The cost of housing the Portland metropolitan area alone has increased 63% over the last 10 years. Often, survivors of domestic or sexual violence are forced to flee both their home and their employment. An increase in victim compensation that seeks to keep pace with the rapidly rising living costs in Oregon is extremely important.
- Lastly, HB 2621 appropriately seeks to improve communication between the Department of Justice and the survivor of domestic or sexual assault who is applying for compensation. If the department rejects a survivor’s compensation claim, the survivor subsequently seeks a 30-day review of the department’s decision, HB 2621 would require the department to seek approval to extend the 30-day review process if the appeal has insufficient information.

Oregon still has a long way to go to adequately support survivors of domestic and sexual assault. HB 2621 strengthen and improves a survivor’s ability to be compensated for the crime that has been perpetrated against them. For this reason and those listed above, we ask that you please support the passage of HB 2621.

Thank you,

Niki Terzieff
Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence