



March 22, 2017

Dear Oregon 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.

In the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event survivors often experience many complex emotions including grief, sadness, anger and confusion. Navigating complicated systems is a challenge for many, but for trauma survivors it can be extremely overwhelming. Advocates play a crucial role in empowering survivors by informing them of their options and rights; without advocates many survivors would be unaware of the multitude of available services and resources and may not access the support they deserve.

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; SB 795 would ensure survivors of sexual violence are fully informed about potential outcomes and processes by having access to an advocate in the acute aftermath of an assault.

The impacts of sexual violence and trauma are far reaching and involve many complex systems; SB 795 would empower survivors by providing them with accurate information. If the Oregon legislature is serious about creating safer communities and improving the response to sexual violence, SB 795 is an essential step to achieve those goals.

Sincerely,

BB Beltran  
Executive Director  
Sexual Assault Support Services (SASS)