



**Testimony in Support of HB 3279
House Committee on Judiciary
March 27, 2017**

Chair Barker, Vice-Chairs Williamson and Olson, and Members of the Committee,

I submit this testimony on behalf of the Oregon Law Center in support of HB 3279, which would take steps to provide important protections for vulnerable janitorial and security workers against sexual assault and harassment on the job.

As you know, OLC is a statewide non-profit entity that provides free civil legal services to low-income Oregonians. Over the years, the Law Center has seen an increasing number of clients whose civil legal issues are related to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. These issues greatly contribute to the vulnerability of our clients, and further trap them in poverty. We are committed to helping to improve the coordinated community and system response necessary to help stop this violence.

The effects of sexual assault can be immeasurable and often include personal injury or even death, homelessness, lost work time and productivity, alcohol and other drug abuse, increased health care costs, psychological health impacts, adverse impacts on the victims' families, and denial of victims' basic human dignity.

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center reports that the United States Department of Justice estimates that eight percent of rapes occur while the victim is working. Between 2005 and 2009, rape of sexual assault accounted for 2.3% of all non-fatal violence in the workplace. One study of employed women found that 38% had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. See the link for more information:

http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_overview_sexual-violence-workplace.pdf

Oregon has long recognized that an effective response to domestic and sexual violence requires coordination among many elements of the community. However, the importance of employers in the response to sexual violence has been under-recognized. When an employee is assaulted at work, not only is her physical and emotional health impacted, so too is her economic security and the security of her family impacted. Safety from abuse in the workplace is essential in order to allow employees the opportunity to support themselves and their families without risking their mental or physical health.

This bill is an important step forward in ensuring protection against abuse for a vulnerable population of workers whose physical work settings put them at great risk. We thank the sponsors and advocates for their leadership in bringing this bill forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.