



May 9, 2017

Dear Oregon House 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 fear, 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, rights and resources including: the Sexual Assault Victims Emergency Fund which not only covers the cost of a medical assessment and evidence collection but also provides counseling; the Address Confidentiality Program; and Crime Victims' Compensation to name just a few. Without advocates many survivors would be unaware of available services and resources and may not access the support they need and deserve. SB 795 would ensure survivors of sexual violence are fully informed about services, resources, processes and potential outcomes by having access to an advocate in the acute aftermath of an assault

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 is in alignment with this philosophy of empowering survivors by providing them with accurate information and supporting their autonomy. To that end, a key component of SB 795 which ensures survivors are in the driver's seat is that they may decline advocacy services at any time.

The impact of sexual violence and trauma are far reaching and may involve many complex systems. Oregon has been a leader in creating survivor centered legislation and improving our systems' responses to sexual violence and SB 795 would continue this trend.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "BB Beltran".

BB Beltran

Executive Director  
Sexual Assault Support Services (SASS)