



Oregon Coalition

Against Domestic & Sexual Violence

May 10, 2017

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

From: Niki Terzieff

CC: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 795

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 SB 795 which requires medical assessment providers or law enforcement officers, when working with a survivor, to contact a victim advocate and make reasonable efforts to ensure that victim advocate is present and available at medical facility.

Victim advocates are professionals that are trained to support survivors of domestic and sexual assault. Advocates offer victims information about additional assistance, help identify resources and fill out paperwork. Advocates may also contact organizations, such as criminal justice or social service agencies, to get help or information for the survivor.

I want to especially argue for the adoption of the -3 amendment which encourages direct contact between an advocate and a victim. The victim can decline services at any point during the process, however, there is a very real, tangible benefit for victims when advocates can explain their role to the victim directly. This is the best way victims can be guaranteed full information before they make a decision. Asking a victim "may I call an advocate out for you" vs. "I have an advocate in the hall to speak with you about how they can support you through this process and help you plan for your safety" elicits two very different responses. The first is impacted by trauma and the victim's reluctance to "bother another person," while the latter removes that barrier all together. This process is considered national best practice because the risk of missing advocacy for a survivor that would choose it if they had full information is too high.

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. The hours and days after an assault are the most vulnerable moments for a survivor. Often the key to recovery, as well as to a survivor's ability to subsequently participate in the prosecution of the perpetrator, is a survivor's ability to lean on an advocate for support and information. SB 795 helps insure that survivors have immediate access to an invaluable asset in their recovery from abuse.

Oregon still has a long way to go to adequately support survivors of domestic and sexual assault. SB 795 moves us a step forward to providing survivors all the support they need in the aftermath of an assault. For this reason and those listed above, we ask that you please support the passage of SB 795.

Thank you,

Niki Terzieff
Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence