

May 9, 2017

The Honorable Chair Barker
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Barker and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Women's Health and Wellness Alliance (OWHWA), is a group of legislators, health care personnel, state and local agency staff and citizen advocates, who are dedicated to promoting the health, safety and economic well-being of women. The Co-Chairs of the OWHWA strongly support SB 795, and encourage the committee's thoughtful consideration of this legislation.

Oregon has the second highest rate in the nation of violence against women. One in four women in Oregon will experience sexual violence or rape in their lifetime. This rate is even higher for women of color. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network roughly every two out of three cases of sexual assault go unreported. When survivors do seek help, the process can be traumatic and difficult to navigate.

SB795 will ensure that survivors of sexual assault that undergo a medical exam will have immediate access to a victim advocate. Victim advocates services provide immediate and on-going confidential support to sexual assault victims. Access to advocacy services has been proven to increase the safety and stability of victims, mitigates trauma and reduces the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder.

SB 795 provides access to comprehensive healthcare and advocacy services to survivors of sexual assault. These services offer survivors the supports they need to overcome the trauma cause by sexual assault and seek justice from their perpetrators. OWHWA appreciates the committee's thoughtful consideration of this bill, and urges your support for SB 795.

Sincerely,

The OWHWA Co-Chairs:



Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward



Representative Karin Power



Senator Kathleen Taylor



Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer