

**Testimony Supporting HB 3464  
House Committee on Rules  
June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

Chair Williamson, Vice-Chairs McLane and Rayfield, and Members of the Committee,

I submit this testimony on behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC) in support of HB 3464, which will strengthen privacy protections and facilitate access to justice for vulnerable populations.

As you know, the Oregon Law Center is a statewide non-profit law firm whose mission is to achieve justice for the low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. We help our clients with their most critical legal needs — food, shelter, medical care, income maintenance, and physical safety. About forty percent of our cases involve domestic or sexual violence, and the majority of our clients are parents with children to support. The populations we serve are fighting a constant battle to maintain a basic minimum standard of living for themselves and their children. They are without the benefit of financial reserves or support to tide them over during unexpected hard times, and they are often living in or just escaping crisis.

It is critical to the health and safety of our clients that they have access to the infrastructure of safety-net programs for which they are eligible, and that their access to our state's justice system is not impeded. We hear stories from clients every day that the threat – real or perceived – of deportation has started to impact their willingness to access the help they need for themselves and their families. Mothers are afraid to apply for food stamp benefits for their children, and victims of domestic violence are afraid to go to the courthouse to seek protection from abuse. Parents are afraid to take their kids to doctors' appointments. Individuals are afraid to be witnesses in court proceedings. Families are afraid to take their children to school. This fear is felt by clients who are citizens as well as by those who are not. We hear similar stories from our partner agencies.

HB 3464 will reassure our client populations that they may access the justice system and seek safety net services for their children without fear that their private information will be shared or used in ways that could hurt them. The bill will provide guidance to agencies about how to implement policies that respect confidentiality while complying with state and federal law. The bill will provide clarity and consistency necessary for the health and safety of our communities.

For these reasons, we urge support of HB 3464. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.