

Dear Senators:

I oversee the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention. The Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention (Institute) is a program of Alliance for HOPE International which was launched in 2011. The Institute provides training to approximately 10,000 professionals a year through technical assistance, web-based education programs and on-site trainings. We also serve as the clearinghouse for professionals seeking materials, new tools, protocols, laws and research related to domestic violence and sexual assault strangulation crimes.

I am writing to urge the passage of SB 1562 which seeks to increase the penalty for strangulation from a misdemeanor to a felony and expand the definition of strangulation to include pressure to the chest as a crime.

Today, strangulation is recognized as the most lethal form of domestic abuse. It only takes seconds to cause unconsciousness and only minutes of continuous pressure to cause death. Due to a lack of training, lack of adequate laws and a lack of protocols, non-fatal strangulation cases have been missed across America. Fortunately, over the last 15 years, 46 states have realized the urgent need to create felony strangulation statutes to protect victims of this life-threatening conduct as well as delayed and long-term consequences. In 2013, the Violence Against Women Act made strangulation and suffocation assaults a federal offense with a recommended sentence of up to 10-years. State, Federal and Tribal governments now clearly recognize and understand the seriousness of this offense and the long-term consequences to their victims.

When the Washington legislature considered passing its strangulation law, they made these important legislative findings:

- Assault by strangulation may result in immobilization of a victim, may cause a loss of consciousness, injury, or even death, and has been a factor in a significant number of domestic violence related assaults and fatalities.
- While not limited to acts of assault against an intimate partner, assault by strangulation is often knowingly inflicted upon an intimate partner with the intent to commit physical injury, or substantial or great bodily harm.
- Strangulation is one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence.
- The particular cruelty of this offense and its potential effects upon a victim both physically and psychologically, merit its categorization as a ranked felony offense under 9A.36 RCW."

Oregon also needs a felony strangulation in order to save lives and protect victims of domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse and sexual assault from immediate, delayed and/or long-term consequences. By making strangulation a felony, Oregon will allow police and prosecutors the ability to prosecute individuals for the crimes they are committing and hopefully prevent homicides

Strangulation is recognized as a predictor of a homicide. Domestic violence victims who are strangled, even one time, are 750% more likely to be murdered by their abuser (Glass, 2008). In the United States, most homicide victims of domestic violence are shot to death, however, at least 50% of those homicide victims, were previously strangled immediately before they were killed. Thereby making strangulation the last warning shot before a homicide occurs and our last opportunity to save a live. Victims who are

repeatedly strangled are not only at risk of a homicide but also suffering strokes, brain damage, miscarriages (if pregnant), early dementia, thyroid issues and much more.

By making non-fatal strangulation a felony, the citizens of Oregon will be safer.

Thank you for your leadership.

Gael Strack

CEO & Co-Founder

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