

February 21, 2018
House Committee on Judiciary
Re: Support for SB 1562 A

Chair Barker, Vice-Chair Williamson, Vice-Chair Olson and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

As the Director of *A Safe Place Family Justice Center for Clackamas County* and a Lieutenant with the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office, I have witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of the crime of strangulation on victims, which is why I strongly support SB 1562 A.

A Safe Place Family Justice Center opened in December 2013 with the support of the Clackamas County Board of County Commissioners and operates under the leadership of the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office. *A Safe Place Family Justice Center* is a partnership between public and non-profit agencies co-located under one roof providing trauma informed, wrap around services to victims and their children fleeing domestic violence, sexual violence, elder abuse, human trafficking, and stalking.

The Family Justice Center model is recognized as the best-practice model for providing intervention services for domestic violence victims by the U.S. Department of Justice. *A Safe Place Family Justice Center* is the first and only Family Justice Center in Oregon and one of 110 operational in the U.S. Our nine on-site public and non-profit partners work together on the cutting-edge of evidence based practices in domestic violence services with the goal of reducing and eliminating domestic violence and domestic violence homicides in our community.

Life-saving services offered at *A Safe Place Family Justice Center* are free of charge and include safety planning, assistance with filing court protective orders, accessing emergency shelter, filing police reports, accessing civil legal services, food resources, housing and mental health counseling. Utilizing video conferencing technology, our on-site video courtroom allows victims seeking protective orders to appear in Circuit Court while remaining in a trauma-informed environment with advocacy support throughout the court process. In 2017, 386 protective orders were processed at ASP-FJC and the center had over 5,000 visits-for-services.

In 2014, *A Safe Place Family Justice Center's* multi-disciplinary High Risk Response Team (HRRT) was established and is comprised of the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office (Investigations, Jail, and Parole & Probation), Clackamas County District Attorney's Office,

Clackamas Women's Services, and the Oregon Department of Human Services - Child Welfare. As a team, we recognize domestic violence homicides are both predictable and preventable.

The HRRT works collaboratively to identify domestic violence cases with the highest risks factors for lethality and offers a coordinated response and support for victims. Our goals are to prevent domestic violence homicides and re-assaults, provide an ongoing audit of the systems' response so that dangerous gaps are closed, and reduce reliance on shelters by allowing victims and their children to remain safely in their communities.

Strangulation is one the highest risk factors when determining the potential for lethality in domestic violence cases. A study of our HRRT cases from 2014-2016 showed 65% of victims had reported they were strangled by their partner. Statistics from the national Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention show odds for a homicide increase 750% for victims who have been previously strangled, compared to victims who have never been strangled.

The short and long-term health effects for strangulation victims can also be dire. Strangulation can produce minor injuries, serious bodily injury or death. We know death can occur days or weeks after the attack due to carotid artery dissection and respiratory complications such as pneumonia as well as a risk of blood clots travelling to the brain. In addition, many victims report psychological issues such as PTSD, depression, suicidal ideation, memory problems, anxiety, amnesia and psychosis.

Survivors of non-fatal strangulation often live under the power and control of their abuser. **In many cases, the abuser doesn't strangle their partner to kill them – they strangle them to let them know they can take their life at any time they wish.** Loss of consciousness can occur within 5-10 seconds and death within minutes. Often times, this means the victim is strangled repeatedly to unconsciousness over a short period of time.

A former client of a Family Justice Center stated, "Actually, when I came out of that [strangulation incident], I was more submissive – more terrified that the next time I might not come out – I might not make it. So I think I gave him all my power from there because I could see how easy it was for him to just take my life like he had given it to me."

It is for these reasons that I urge you to fully support SB 1562 A.

Sincerely,



Lt. Angela Brandenburg, Director
A Safe Place Family Justice Center
Clackamas County Sheriff's Office