

2/24/2018

Chair Barker, Vice Chair Olson, Vice Chair Williamson and members of the House Committee on Judiciary.

I am Julia Roberts, a resident of Multnomah County and the city of Portland. My sons and I moved here May 2016 from Troutdale with the help of the Gateway Center, the Community Warehouse, the Bradley Angle House and many Multnomah County agencies. The Multnomah County courts granted us a Protective Order that was converted into a permanent part of my divorce decree processed in November 2016. The Address Confidentiality Program saved our lives. Multnomah County granted me and all three of my sons new names to start our lives in light and safety.

Since January 2017 I have become involved in healthy processing and educational projects like SCARS (Survivor Collective Alliance Reaching Society) which is a support group of survivors for weekly check-ins which dispels confusion and second-guessing so that we begin regain our confidence. The SCARS group usually provides the participants in the DVSD (Domestic Violence Safe Dialogue) workshops that focus on restoring our voices and ability to self-advocate, which feeds into the participation in the Tri-county Survivor Impact Panels currently court-mandated in the Portland area, for those convicted of domestic violence charges. Through SCARS, I am also currently half way through the OCADS (Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence) Advocacy Training course so that I may be able to volunteer at the new Washington County Family Justice Center domestic violence hub opening on the 26th of March, 2018. Last, I am in Oregon's first Family Justice Center survivor Voices Committee at A Safe Place in Clackamas County. This last group is providing a powerful microphone to the views of actual survivors, a sign of a state-wide strong system that isn't afraid of feedback and wants to improve.

I am writing about SB 1562, making strangulation a felony.

Others will provide other reasons and those are important. I am asking you to consider just one reason that I have personally experienced.

When my every move was being monitored, when I was deprived of sleep and even a full hour of concentration, when it was the dynamic that if I did not please my spouse, he focused on our sons who had no power at all against him, the simple fact that he had been careful to not use his hands when he did certain things, delayed our escape. That we were not even allowed to use unhappy words and that only he could define reality meant that my sons and I bore his abuse far too long. I couldn't see a way out that didn't eventually place my sons at risk. At the time of our escape my sons were practicing self-harm and were suicidal.

Not defining acts that did happen - like holding us down and pressing - as felonies with serious consequences, left us defenseless.

Please defend people who like us, who because of hostage situations and this loophole in the law, had no way of escape. Please make non-lethal strangulation a felony.

I'm signing this with a pseudo-name for our safety,

Julia Roberts

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