



**Testimony in support of HB 2014
House Committee on Judiciary
Submitted by Kerry Naughton, Executive Director
March 5, 2019**

Chair Williamson, Co-Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kerry Naughton and I am the Executive Director of Oregon Abuse Advocates & Survivors in Service (OAASIS). OAASIS is a statewide organization that empowers communities to prevent child sexual abuse and help survivors live full, healthy, joyful lives. Our base is comprised of thousands of Oregonians—people who were sexually abused as children, survivors’ family members and loved ones, and community members who care about the safety, health, and well-being of survivors of child sexual abuse. We are working towards a future where all people experience a loving childhood free of abuse and trauma, and all relationships are based on respect, consent, and equity.

OAASIS is a strong supporter of House Bill 2014. This bill will ensure that people who were sexually abused as children can finally hold the people who abused them accountable, as well as the institutions/organizations that knowingly allowed offenders to be around our vulnerable children. These institutions should be held accountable for their negligence—for looking the other way. HB 2014 will restore the power of juries to hear the facts of the case and determine case-by-case justice instead of applying a one-size-fits-all limit on what a jury can determine is fair and just.

Child sexual abuse deeply impacts a person, creating ripple effects that can flow throughout a lifetime. The emotional and psychological pain of child sexual abuse don’t appear on x-rays like a broken bone, but the impact can be just as fracturing to a survivor’s long-term health. Victims of child sexual abuse are far more likely to attempt suicide or turn to alcohol or illegal drugs to self-medicate. These are just a few of the unseen challenges survivors of child sexual abuse must overcome each and every day to live full, healthy, joyful lives. Survivors can heal—but the healing process extends over a lifetime.

Most children are sexually abused by someone they know and trust. This could be at the hands of a family member, loved one or someone else the child looks to for guidance. During the 2017 session, many of you were able to hear Jon Anderson’s story, which he wanted me to share with you today. For Jon, it was his trusted Boy Scout troop leader. Jon’s abuser had been a known problem in the San Francisco area, but instead of holding him accountable, the Boy Scouts transferred him to Portland, where he abused 11 boys in the mid-1970’s. Like far too many institutions trusted to protect and nurture our children, the Scouts turned a blind eye, swept the problem under the rug, and through their silence and inaction, continued supporting people who sexually abused children, allowing them to sexually abuse children again.

Jon’s case helped to uncover hundreds of internal documents showing the Scouts knew of the abuse and yet allowed known abusers to continue to work, unsupervised, with children. Through Jon’s civil case, and others

like his, the real facts and flaws in the reporting system were uncovered and forced institutional change to put the focus where it should have always been—on keeping our children safe.

Child sexual abuse thrives in the shadows of secrecy. As we saw in Jon's case, often the only way to get powerful, trusted institutions and corporations to change their ways is to hold them accountable through the civil justice system. I ask you to stand with me and countless victims of child sexual abuse to ensure they receive justice on a case-by-case basis. There should never be an arbitrary, one-size-fits-all value placed on their quality of life.

Survivors deserve their day in court. Please join me in supporting House Bill 2014.