



Melissa Erlbaum, MPA
Executive Director

March 21, 2019

Support for SB 962

Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Clackamas Women's Services, I write to urge your support of SB962.

Clackamas Women's Services (CWS) has served as Clackamas County's primary provider of services for domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking for over thirty years. We have supported victims in accessing the life-saving U-Visa program.

This important legislation expands and facilitates access to the federal U-Visa program for non-citizen victims of domestic violence who are helpful to law enforcement or government officials in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity. The purpose of the federal program was to strengthen the ability of law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute crimes, while also protecting victims. Participating survivors can use the U-Visa program as a pathway to lawful presence/status.

We have seen first-hand the critical importance of the U-Visa program for survivors of domestic violence in our community. Without meaningful access to this program we risk victims retreating further into silence. This silence puts the victim at serious risk of harm.

To qualify for a U nonimmigrant visa, a victim must submit a signed certification from a law enforcement official. But across Oregon, victims who request a U visa certification encounter differing responses depending on the individual law enforcement agency they interact with. Sometimes there is confusion, sometimes delay – these are barriers to safety for victims.

We whole-heartedly support this important legislation and firmly believe it will contribute to victim safety and the public safety of Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Erlbaum', is written in a cursive style.

Melissa Erlbaum, MPA

Executive Director