

March 22, 2019

Re: Please Support HB 2657

Chair Williamson and members of the House Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for considering my testimony. My name is Carli Rohner, and I am a resident of Salem. I write to you as a prevention educator, specializing in working with college students in Oregon to reduce and prevent sexual violence on campuses since 2005. More importantly, I write to you as a parent of an amazing second grader, currently enrolled in the Salem Keizer School District. Providing opportunities for the youth of our state to develop healthy relationships and prevent sexual violence is important to me professionally, and is also deeply personal. I am requesting that you please support HB 2657.

The Higher Education Context

In recent years, our colleges and universities in Oregon have made great strides to promote healthy relationships, teach bystander intervention skills, promote norms change, and prevent sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating and interpersonal violence. As our elected officials, you have supported and made great investment in campuses by helping students gain access to confidential reporting options¹, and implementing notification requirements to make students aware of their available resources². This greatly supports survivors, and (in turn) our prevention efforts on campus. Thank you!

The systems of response and prevention can be thought of as two sides of the same coin: if we do not support both sides equally, then our efforts will never be as effective as we intended. **We must provide resources to support survivors that have experienced violence, AND work to prevent the violence from occurring in the first place.**

With so much focus on our systems of higher education in recent years, we must also acknowledge that many of the students attending Oregon's 2 and 4 year colleges and universities come directly to their new campus from Oregon's K-12 education systems. Unfortunately, many of their former elementary, middle and high school programs experience varying degrees of financial and institutional support to implement educational initiatives that would help Oregon's youth build the tools necessary to engage in healthy relationships and prevent violence from occurring to themselves, their peers, and their greater communities.

The education of Oregon's youth in the K-12 setting has a direct impact on Oregon's systems of higher education. This also applies to the education that builds the necessary skills to establish healthy relationships and prevent sexual and relationship violence.

What strides could our young people make (and what impact could we have on issue of sexual violence in college) if our young people came to college already prepared with the foundational tools for preventing violence? What an amazing possibility. I believe that this can be possible if we do our part to support prevention efforts for K-12 students in our state.

Social & Fiscal Responsibility

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention lists “Teach Skills to Prevent Sexual Violence” as one of five crucial elements in creating effective primary prevention of sexual violence strategies. “Teach Skills to Prevent Sexual Violence” includes: Teaching healthy, safe dating and intimate relationship skills to adolescents, Promoting healthy sexuality, and providing “Empowerment-based training”³. Prevention staff at Oregon’s Domestic Violence + Sexual Assault (DVSA) agencies are uniquely qualified to offer support and education regarding violence prevention, and assist in this skill-building for our young people. **Providing our community DVSA programs with the necessary funding to implement violence prevention initiatives in Oregon schools is good for ALL Oregonians, and will help prevent future violence.**

Research shows us that government sources in America pay an estimated \$1 trillion (32%) of the lifetime economic burden of supporting survivors of sexual violence⁴. My hope is that our state dollars can provide the youth of Oregon with the skills necessary to reduce and prevent violence. We know that by providing our K-12 students with these necessary skills, the number of survivors that we will be charged with providing services for will reach an all-time low: not because we cannot or will not serve them, but because we will have fewer Oregonians experiencing violence in the first place. This is the Oregon I want to live in.

By engaging in these primary prevention strategies, we can decrease not only the number of Oregonians experiencing violence (our social responsibility to our neighbors and citizens), but we can also decrease the financial burden on our state (thereby exercising our fiduciary responsibility to spend Oregon dollars effectively and according to best practices).

Prevention isn’t just Possible, It is Proven Effective

The efficacy of primary prevention has been proven throughout the course of our country’s history. Public health initiatives encouraging youth to wear seat belts⁵ and reducing the impact of tobacco use⁶ are just two examples of how communities and legislators have worked together to improve health outcomes for young people in our state (and country). Sexual and relationship violence are public health concerns⁷. **We know that primary prevention is paramount in reducing the rates of those that experience sexual violence^{8,9},** just as primary prevention was effective in regards to reducing the amount of deaths experienced by

not wearing a seat belt, or the number of people experiencing negative health outcomes from tobacco use.

We have been successful implementing primary prevention in the past. We can do it again.

A Request

Let us send our young people to college with the necessary skills to have bright and productive futures. Let our systems of higher education spend less time and financial resources having to educate students about the foundations of nonviolence, and instead be allowed to focus their energies to ensure that students can lead us into future generations of success in Oregon. Let our young people arrive on campus having experienced less violence than those classes that preceded them.

Let us (as responsible adults in our state) reduce the financial burden to survivors and our state by preventing violence in the first place. Let us replicate the work of past public health initiatives by teaching the foundational information and skills necessary in order to provide healthy futures and communities for more Oregonians. **This is achievable by supporting HB 2657.**

Thank you for your time, consideration, and for supporting the young people of our state.

Sincerely,
Carli Rohner

Included Citations

1. ORS 40.264 Rule 507-1. (2017) , House Bill 3476 (2015) Certified advocate-victim privilege
2. Oregon Senate Bill 759 (2015) Requires public universities, community colleges and Oregon-based private universities and colleges to adopt written protocol for victims of sexual assault.
3. Basile, K.C., DeGue, S., Jones, K., Freire, K., Dills, J., Smith, S.G., Raiford, J.L. (2016). *STOP SV: A Technical Package to Prevent Sexual Violence*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
4. Peterson, C., DeGue, S., Florence, C., & Lokey, C. N. (2017). Lifetime Economic Burden of Rape Among U.S. Adults. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 52(6), 691-701.
5. Dept of Transportation (US), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). *Traffic Safety Facts: Occupant Protection*. Washington (DC): NHTSA; 2009. Available at URL: <http://www.nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811160.pdf>
6. *50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General* (Rep.). (2014). Rockville, MD: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Public Health Service Office of the Surgeon General.
7. Smith SG, Zhang X, Basile KC, Merrick MT, Wang J, Kresnow M, Chen J. (2018). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2015 Data Brief— Updated Release. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
8. Basile, K. C. (2003). Implications of public health for policy on sexual violence. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 989, 446-463.
9. Basile, K. C. (2015). A comprehensive approach to sexual violence prevention. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 372(24), 2350-2352.