

Monday, March 23rd, 2019

Dear Chair Williamson and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I have managed Sexual Assault Resource Center's (SARC) Prevention & Education Program since 2015. SARC's Prevention & Education Program provides primary prevention programming to schools in Multnomah and Washington Counties. Our evidence-based curricula address the root causes of sexual violence through utilization of the CDC's risk and protective factors for perpetration, promotion of healthy relationships and consent culture. The curricula build awareness about sexual violence and oppression, skills in bystander intervention and media literacy of cultural messages about relationships, sex, and consent. The goal of our program is to change the norms in our society that contribute to sexual violence. Our organization, which has specialized in providing services to survivors of sexual assault since 1977, is uniquely positioned to provide these services. Building awareness around sexual violence increases the number of people willing to come forward and disclose that they have experienced sexual assault, which in turn increases the number of trauma survivors seeking help and support and willing to report assaults to law enforcement. This results in increases in the number of perpetrators held accountable for their crimes, which promotes safety and healing in our communities.

Since the passage of Erin's Law (SB856, 2015), surrounding school districts have reached out for support in implementing four sessions of child sexual abuse prevention in every grade from kindergarten through twelfth grade. We have provided training and some technical assistance to Portland Public Schools, Beaverton, and Hillsboro School Districts. Teachers and school districts need ongoing support to comply with Erin's Law. We have the relationships and ability to provide the training and support requested, but we lack the funding to properly do so. Funding is consistently the biggest threat in our prevention work. In previous years, Rape Prevention Education (RPE) funding comprised one hundred percent of our prevention funds. Only one other funding stream from Oregon Crime Victim Survivors Services Division (CVSSD) of the Department of Justice addressing sexual violence, ODSVS (Oregon Domestic Sexual Violence Services), funds prevention activity; other funding sources available through CVSSD are restricted to funding victim services. SARC was not selected as an RPE recipient in the most recent RPE funding cycle, and, in fact, only four programs around the state received RPE funding, which left all other programs, including SARC, without funding for prevention education programs. Since 2017, SARC has pieced together funding for prevention education by relying on ODSVS funds, program income via revenue from trainings and funds from private foundations to maintain our Prevention & Education Program. The time we spend researching and writing grants and soliciting donations for the program diverts precious staff time and energy

away from actually providing prevention education to simply trying to keep the program alive and limits our ability to plan for program sustainability and growth.

SARC thanks the committee for taking the time to learn and hear about the work we do in our communities to create a safer world. We know that there is limited funding. We urge you to consider that prevention is a cost-effective way to address public health concerns. And our children and communities deserve sexual violence prevention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jenna Harper". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Jenna Harper, M.S.W.