

March 26, 2019

Re: Support HB 2657

Dear Chair Williamson, Vice Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

We are writing to support HB 2657. On behalf of [Family Justice Centers](#) in more than 40 states that serve 200,000 adult and child survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, child abuse, and human trafficking each year, we urge your support for this powerful sexual assault and violence prevention legislation. We lead Alliance for HOPE International, one of the leading systems and social change organizations in the country. We focus on creating innovative, collaborative, trauma-informed, hope-centered approaches to meeting the needs of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children. We train more than 10,000 first responders each year and support Family Justice Centers and similar types of multi-agency Centers in more than 25 countries. We run the largest camping and mentoring program in the country for children impacted by domestic violence, called [Camp HOPE America](#). We also lead the [Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention](#), the most comprehensive training program in the world for professionals working with victims of near and non-fatal strangulation.

Oregon has one of the highest rates of domestic and sexual violence in the nation, with approximately 1 million women and girls — nearly half of those in the state — affected in their lifetime (Oregon Women's Foundation Count Her In Report, 2016). At least one in six of all men in Oregon experience sexual violence.

Primary and secondary prevention programs can effectively break generational cycles of violence and abuse. Primary prevention programs promote healthy relationships, teach bystander intervention skills, and promote change in social norms and the prevention of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and dating and interpersonal violence. We have been honored to work in recent years with Melissa Erlbaum and the amazing team at Clackamas Women's Services (CWS) as they have worked to address the root causes of violence, shift community norms, respond to disclosures, and work in partnership with schools, as well as intervention and crisis services, to help build thriving, safe, and healthy communities.

Without a dedicated source of funding, Sexual and Domestic Violence Programs like CWS are caught in the bind of constantly having to respond to crises without having resources to stop this violence before it ever occurs. While we have made many positive strides to improve prevention and response efforts in Oregon and around the

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country, communities across Oregon lack infrastructure, technical assistance, and resources to fully implement and sustain effective violence prevention education. Your support for HB 2657 will change this by funding comprehensive violence prevention.

In the Oregon Student Violence Report, 42% of students report believing there is not an atmosphere of trust and respect at school. Youth who experience dating or sexual violence have higher rates of suicidal thoughts and other health consequences such as anxiety and depression, difficulty concentrating and a loss of hope. Students robbed of hope don't do as well in school, become more likely to abuse or be abused, and often lose their pathways to lives filled with meaning and wellbeing.

In Oregon, counties where a prevention and education program exist have documented powerful results:

- 59% of students reported an increased knowledge of healthy communication skills and awareness of how they communicate with others.
- 76% of students reported increased knowledge regarding signs of an unhealthy relationship.
- 54% of students were less likely to experience victimization by a dating partner.

The solution is clear. We must invest in violence prevention education to address the epidemic of domestic and sexual violence in Oregon and across the country. The path forward is clear, programs across the state are poised to act, schools are eager to provide this much needed education...a funding stream dedicated to violence prevention education will achieve long term positive impacts on the problem of sexual and domestic violence in Oregon.

We urge your strong support for HB2657. Prevention programming is lifesaving and culture changing work.

With Great HOPE,

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Family Justice Center Alliance ♦ Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention ♦ Camp HOPE America

Justice Legal Network ♦ VOICES Survivors Advocacy Network