



**Testimony Supporting HB 2657
House Judiciary Committee
March 29th, 2019**

Chair Williamson, Vice-Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, I submit this testimony in support of the HB 2657, which would create a dedicated funding source to ensure greater capacity for community-based non-profits, culturally specific, and tribal victim services programs to implement violence prevention education in K-12 and other community settings.

The Oregon Law Center (OLC) is a non-profit law firm whose mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. Over the years, the Law Center has seen an increasing number of clients whose civil legal issues are related to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. These issues greatly contribute to the vulnerability of our clients and their children, and further trap them in poverty and crisis. We are committed to improving the coordinated community and system response necessary to stop this violence. In accomplishing this goal, focusing efforts on prevention is of the utmost importance. Teaching Oregon's young people about healthy relationships can help to prevent future violence and victimization, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health problems, and other crises that impact individuals, families, and communities.

Oregon has seen reduced crime rates as a whole, yet according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, our reported rates of sexual violence are among the highest in the nation.¹ Across Oregon, 50% of all women and 17% of all men have experienced sexual violence. And each year, a shocking number of Oregonians are killed as a result of domestic violence. In 2017 alone, 32 people died due to domestic violence. These deaths include men, women, and children.² The physical, psychological, emotional, and economic damage inflicted by this violence is long-lasting and devastating. It is imperative to the health and safety of our communities that we dedicate resources to prevention efforts.

Oregon's network of domestic and sexual violence programs across the state work hard every day to meet the needs of victims in crisis, helping to shelter, safety plan, and counsel victims. Because the need is so great, the majority of program time and resources are necessarily focused on emergency and safety response. Until there is a dedicated funding stream for prevention efforts, programs with expertise will not be able to successfully work upstream on a statewide scale.

¹ <https://www.opb.org/news/article/sexual-assault-high-rate-oregon-women-girls-report/>

² <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2018R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/141641>

HB 2657 would provide a funding structure through which the Department of Justice, Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division could support community-based, culturally specific, and tribal domestic and sexual violence programs to build sustainable statewide prevention efforts. A comprehensive violence prevention education plan for our state will help promote healthy relationships, teach bystander intervention skills, promote norms change, and lead to the prevention of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating and interpersonal violence.

Reports from the Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force indicate that pilot projects have shown us that where prevention efforts exist, they have been very successful. Passage of HB 2657 would allow us to scale prevention efforts statewide, allowing more Oregon youth a greater chance to be part of a healthy and safe community. HB 2657 provides the right road map for our state's future health. For these reasons, OLC urges support of the bill.

Thank you for your consideration, and for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Sybil Hebb
Oregon Law Center