

To the Higher Education Coordinating Committee:

My name is Samantha Takacs and I'm currently a third-year law student at the University of Oregon. This semester, I participated in the Domestic Violence Protective Order Clinic in which I represented a survivor of domestic violence in court as she sought a restraining order to protect her from her abuser. My experience was incomparable and could not have happened without the funding provided to domestic violence education through HB 5024.

Through my representation of my survivor client, my eyes were opened to how essential this type of low-income representation truly is to the lives of these individuals. My client was already worrying about the logistics of paying her rent with her abuser off the lease, making her options for legal representation in getting her restraining order extremely limited, and the Domestic Violence Clinic was a beacon of hope in a dark time. My client's case was somewhat complicated and she would surely have been unsuccessful without legal representation, not to mention the furtherance of abuse and manipulation that could have continued had she faced her abuser as a pro se petitioner.

In addition to the benefits that my client received, the learning experience on my end was indescribable and nothing short of remarkable. Not only did I learn about courtroom procedure and the law surrounding protective orders, but I learned how to work with a survivor client in a sensitive situation. After passing the bar, I would like to continue to represent survivors in various legal cases and my experience through the Clinic reinforced this desire and provided a preview of what my future career will look and feel like. The Clinic was essential to my education and preparation for practice.

Discontinued funding will have an extreme negative impact on future students as well as survivors seeking representation. The community as a whole does benefit from the funding that makes the Clinic possible and a lack of funding will damage the community, prevent future lawyers from getting essential practical experience, and prevent future clients from hiring passionate and hard-working, low-income legal representation at a time where this support is crucial. I truly cannot stress the importance of the Domestic Violence Clinic and its funding enough and I would be disappointed to see the Clinic suffer as a result of lost funds.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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