



Sybil Hebb  
Director of Policy Advocacy  
522 SW Fifth Ave.  
Suite 812  
Portland, OR 97204  
P: 503.936.8959 (cell)  
[shebb@oregonlawcenter.org](mailto:shebb@oregonlawcenter.org)

**Support for HB 3120A  
Senate Workforce Committee  
April 30th, 2019**

Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Knopp, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, I submit this testimony in support of House Bill 3120A, which would include victims of hate crimes in the unemployment insurance protection that has been offered under current law since 2005 to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The bill comes from the House with a 58 – 2(excused) vote.

OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. A significant number of our clients come to us for help as they are struggling to escape or recover from domestic or sexual violence. Domestic and sexual violence are serious public health and safety issues in our state. Victims suffer great psychological, emotional, and physical trauma, which have long-term impact on their lives. Domestic and sexual violence greatly contribute to the vulnerability of our clients, and further trap them in poverty and crisis. OLC is committed to supporting the coordinated community response necessary to help prevent this violence, and to helping victims in crisis move towards the safety and stability they need for recovery in the aftermath of crime.

**Background:**

Oregon's current unemployment compensation statutes provide coverage for victims of the crimes of domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking who are forced to leave work in order to protect their safety or the safety of their families. This current law recognizes that sometimes, victims of targeted violence must quit their jobs because of a safety threat. Violence victims have "good cause" to leave work, if their safety is at risk. For example, a victim may be a target of violence at the workplace, or may be so unsafe in the community that she or he must leave the community in order to be safe.

Without access to unemployment insurance, the loss of economic independence would make it impossible for a victim to relocate to find safety.

The current law has important safeguards to ensure that it will be used reasonably: The applicant must show:

- That he/she is a victim, or the parent or guardian of a minor victim;
- That there is a reasonable belief that there will be future violence;
- That s/he cannot work for protection reasons;
- That s/he pursued reasonable available alternatives to leaving work.



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**HB 3120 extends current reasonable and important protections for crime victims to ensure that victims of the crime of intimidation are also covered.** It is in the best interests of employees and of workplaces as a whole that victims of targeted violence be able to take the steps necessary to best protect themselves and their families. Hate crimes are on the rise across the nation, and these targeted crimes put employees and their co-workers at risk. If a victim must leave work to ensure safety, thru no fault of their own, they should not be denied the support of unemployment benefits.

The bill defines intimidation crimes to be consistent with the criminal code definitions of first or second degree intimidation, and provides coverage to those who can show it is more likely than not that they are victims of such crimes. The bill gives victims and their employers a positive option to avoid violence in the workplace, saving victims, families, co-workers, and employers. The law should enable the victim to make safe decisions, as a matter of public policy and in the interests of protecting the victim as well as other employees.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge support of HB 3120A. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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