

To Our Communities:

Most people don't want to see the things we've seen. Most people don't want to hear the stories that we've heard. And most people don't want to talk about the things that we talk about. Not to 12 strangers in a jury box and certainly not with a terrified kindergartener or the bruised and broken mother of 3 who must steel themselves to finally face their abuser in an intimidating courtroom. But we are prosecutors. And this is our job. It's our job to meet people on their worst days, listen to their worst stories and be their champion as they seek justice. And while we can't fix what happened to these victims of crime, we have committed our careers to not making it worse. We have committed our lives to walking beside them in an attempt to hold their abusers accountable and then allow them to walk away from us as survivors.

We are elected District Attorneys. In fact, we are 8 of the only 9 Female District Attorneys from across our state. Together, we have personally handled innumerable cases of unspeakable violence against some of the most vulnerable members of our communities. Together we have over 120 years of prosecutorial experience, meeting often with women and children who bear both the visible and the invisible scars of horrific domestic violence and appalling physical and sexual child abuse. Together we have held countless hands and reassured countless victims that they were believed, they were not at fault, and they deserved justice. And together we understand the important role that the voter-passed mandatory minimum sentencing law of Ballot Measure 11 plays in giving these victims safety, security, certainty and trust in our criminal justice system. By providing minimum sentencing for the most physically and sexually violent felony crimes, we know that Ballot Measure 11 provides survivors with the time and space they need to move on from their victimization without the threat of their abuser in their lives.

As our Oregon Legislature currently contemplates the full repeal of this crucial safeguard for victims¹, we feel it is important the public understands that such actions would make our communities *less* safe. Repealing Ballot Measure 11 will result in significantly shorter sentences for those who prey upon our children and assault our neighbors. Repealing Ballot Measure 11 promises less certainty in those sentences as they can be further cut by more than 40%², undermining any faith or confidence victims may have placed in the system. Repealing Ballot Measure 11 will only encourage less reporting by victims of intimate and family violence. The rigors of navigating the criminal legal process is deterrent enough. Victims who have no guarantee of fairness and no hope for a reliable sentence will only have increased reasons to continue to suffer in silence. Our criminal justice system can always get better. And while we support smart, responsible policies that can make the process more equitable and fair for all, repealing Measure 11 does not do that. And the victims we serve deserve better.

While the legislature debates this issue, we ask our communities who care about their public safety, and especially that of women and children, to weigh in with your opinion. We should not return to the days when a rapist would merely receive a probationary slap on the wrist or the man who nearly killed his

¹ SB 191, SB 401, HB 2172, HB 2002

² All these legislative bills contemplate allowing sentences to be reduced in some way for "Earned Time", "Alternative Incarceration Programs" and/or "Short Term Transitional Leave". When granted these time cuts while in prison, an offender can significantly reduce the amount of time served despite the sentence announced by the judge in court.

wife would be simply admonished to “walk away next time she pushes your buttons”. Call your legislator. Send an email. Write a letter. Check in with them on social media.

In the meantime, we will continue to hear the stories nobody wants to hear and fight for justice for victims of these crimes. We will continue to be there on the worst days of people’s lives. Because we are women who are built for this work. We are prosecutors. And it’s our job.

Sincerely,

Paige Clarkson, Marion County DA & Oregon District Attorney’s Association President

Lanee Danforth, Lincoln County DA

Rebecca Frolander, Wallowa County DA

Beth Heckert, Jackson County DA

Gretchen Ladd, Wheeler County DA

Kelsie McDaniel, Union County DA

Patty Perlow, Lane County DA

Carrie Rasmussen, Hood River County DA