



Supporting Survivors • Strengthening Communities • Empowering Change

March 30, 2021

Joint Subcommittee on Human Services
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chair Leiber, Co-Chair Nosse, and members of the Sub-Committee,

I write to you today on behalf of My Sisters' Place in support of HB 5529, and the recommended budget for the Oregon Department of Human Services for the 2021-2023 biennium. Specifically, the DVSA Co-located Advocate Program budget, the Temporary Assistance to Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS) budget, and the Survivor Investment Partnership (SIP) budget are of critical importance to our communities.

Our mission is to comprehensively support those affected by interpersonal violence in Lincoln County by providing shelter, practical assistance, promoting community awareness, and actively working to change the community norms around violence. MSP has been in service to Lincoln County as a dual domestic violence/sexual assault program for over 41 years. We are passionate about providing services that evolve with the needs of our community. Our current services and programs include safety planning, emotional support, system navigation, financial empowerment education, emergency shelter and transport, confidential shelter, transitional housing, therapeutic art support groups, co-located advocates within community partner offices such as DHS, safety planning, a 24-hour crisis hotline called "The Hopeline" and provide 24-hour crisis response, information and referrals, assistance filing protection orders, court/medical accompaniment, child care, fuel/clothing vouchers, clothing/personal items, on-site food bank, and an active Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). We partner with our sister program and MOU partner, The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians CARE Program, to serve our native population and Hopeline.

We operate in a rural area sandwiched between the Coast Mountain Range and the Pacific Ocean on the central Oregon coast. The population, as of 2021, is 51,438 across about 992 square miles. We have a large population of Spanish-Speaking individuals (about 9%). Lincoln County also envelopes the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and has a large population of Native Americans (about 4%). This diverse population presents unique challenges for a rural county; it is beneficial to have culturally responsive services that reflect the make-up of the populations that are served. 20.84% of our clients are from the Hispanic or Latino community and 8.57% of the clients we serve are Native American.

We have all come a long way this last year in adapting to the need at hand but there is still work left to be done. Our families are strained and in need of help. One such need is to support the survivors and their children in our county experiencing or exposed to violence. I am writing you today as a call for help. The needs are great, and the options are few but it is opportunities like this that can make all the difference, especially in rural communities with limited resources like ours. COVID has cast a long shadow and for



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people already experiencing hardship, barriers, and oppression, this pandemic has turned those dark places even darker. There is no magic wand or catch-all answer to many of the problems facing us. However, when we see needs with plausible solutions, we CAN make progress. Your support can be the spark that could help us shed light in those dark unknowns.

Approximately a third of DHS self-sufficiency and child welfare cases involve domestic or sexual violence. The risks due to violence have only escalated during this past year of the COVID pandemic. Successful work with DHS clients who are at safety risk due to violence requires a trauma-informed, culturally specific, and survivor-centered approach. In times of crisis like the ones that we experienced last year, and the one we are continuing to experience, a strong response to aid those who are most impacted is critical.

Domestic Violence Co-Located Advocate Program: This program ensures that survivors who are DHS-involved have access to confidential, survivor-centered services. Specialized domestic violence advocates can provide support to survivors, to help create individualized safety plans and access to a range of community services. This program is the only program specifically creating a link for DHS-involved survivors to community supports that can support long-term safety.

Temporary Assistance to Domestic Violence Survivors: The TA-DVS provides critical one-time emergency financial assistance of up to \$1200 to low-income survivors of domestic violence seeking safety for themselves and their children. The program can pay for emergency transportation, motel vouchers, security locks, lock changes, clothing for a family who had to flee abuse, and other emergency expenses. Payments are made to third party vendors, for safety-related emergency services for the survivor. The program saves lives by making it possible for victims with children to escape immediate danger.

Survivor Investment Partnership (SIP), Policy Option Package #130: This policy option package proposes to invest \$10 million in funding to build upon the TA-DVS and Co-located advocate programs, and to address inequities in access to services across the state. The SIP was advocate programs and to address funding limitations and inequities. The SIP was developed in partnership with the Governor's office, Oregon Tribes, culturally-specific domestic and sexual violence service providers, and community-based domestic and sexual violence service providers statewide. Funding for this program will ensure greater accessibility of advocacy services and meaningful financial support to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault including Tribal communities, individuals without children, and vulnerable populations.

The funding gives tribes and organizations autonomy on how to administer their programs and provides survivors the ability to decide which supports they need to stay safe and maintain stability. In addition to serving survivors in a more culturally holistic way and providing resources for those who may be ineligible for the Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS) Program, a portion of the funds will support the administrative costs of overseeing the program.



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Most importantly, the SIP recognizes that tribes and culturally specific organizations know their communities best, and survivors know their circumstances best.

We strongly support the passage of HB 5529 so that survivors have access to culturally-responsive and culturally-specific, survivor-centered, and trauma-informed services to help access immediate and long-term safety from abuse.

Thank you very much for your service to the State of Oregon, your consideration, and anything you can do to help bring light to this situation.

Sincerely,

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