



Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force

**Testimony in opposition to HB 2002
House Committee on Judiciary
Submitted by Michele Roland-Schwartz, Executive Director
February 25, 2021**

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force (SATF), I'm submitting this testimony in opposition to the proposed sentencing reductions to Sex Abuse 1 included in HB2002. We do not have a position on the remainder of the bill.

SATF's mission is to improve the response to and prevention of sexual violence in Oregon. To that end, we support advancing reforms that address racial disparities in our criminal justice system and thank the proponents of HB2002 for their continued efforts to achieve positive change.

As advocates for sexual and domestic violence survivors, racial, social, and gender justice are core values of our work. To further our values, SATF is actively working to eliminate violence from occurring in the first place. To achieve this goal, dedicated investments in violence prevention education¹ that address the root causes of violence, including racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia, are required. Systemic racism increases the risk of sexual and domestic violence happening in our communities², while simultaneously influencing racial disparities in our criminal justice system. Unfortunately, prevention efforts in Oregon and nationally - while robust - are sorely under-funded.

Survivors of sexual and domestic violence experience systemic and societal barriers unique to this set of person crimes. Survivors have an ongoing need for accountability and for assurances of safety and security.

SATF is committed to exploring and implementing alternative methods of justice in collaboration with survivors³. These methods may include restorative and transformative models that effectively address the needs of survivors and hold offenders accountable. These options do not yet exist in Oregon. For that reason, our opposition is focused on the sentencing reduction of Sex Abuse 1 in HB2002.

Reducing the sentence for Sex Abuse 1 from a mandatory sentence of 75 months to a presumed sentence of 30 months has the potential to trivialize these crimes in the eyes of survivors and undermine their confidence in the ability of the criminal justice system to keep them safe. With less than 3% of reported sexual assault crimes leading to a conviction nationally⁴, we are concerned that reducing sentencing under Sex Abuse 1 will have a chilling effect on survivors' willingness to report sexual assault and participate in the justice system.

SATF appreciates the opportunity to be part of reform efforts moving forward, bringing a focus on prevention education and alternative methods of justice for survivors in our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

¹ SATF Prevention Program: <http://oregonsatf.org/programs/prevention/rape-prevention-and-education/>

² [First Oregon missing and murdered Indigenous persons report released](#), Oregonian, February 21, 2021; Barlow, Jameta Nicole, [Black women, the forgotten survivors of sexual assault](#), February 2020.

³ sujatha baliga: <https://www.sujathabaliga.com/>; Common Justice: <https://www.commonjustice.org/>; Dr. Lindsay Pointer, Restorative Teaching Tools: <https://restorativeteachingtools.com/>; Love with Accountability – Digging up the Roots of Child Sexual Abuse: <https://www.lovewithaccountability.com/>.

⁴ Archambault, Joanne, et. al. *The "Justice Gap" for Sexual Assault Cases: Future Directions for Research and Reform*. March 2012. http://www.ncdsv.org/ncd_linkssexualviolence.html