



**Oregon Commission For Women**

**Advocating for Equity and Diversity throughout Oregon**

Chair Kropf, Vice Chairs Andersen and Wallan, and members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Angela Rico and I serve as a Commissioner for the Oregon Commission for Women (OCFW). OCFW works for the implementation and establishment of economic, social, legal, and political equity for all women in the state of Oregon and to maintain a continuing assessment of issues and needs confronting women in this state. It serves the people of Oregon to empower and support women through our special roles as policy advisors to Oregon state policy makers and leaders. OCFW is a catalyst that empowers partnerships between state governments and women in rural and urban areas to ensure success for all women by addressing issues at the policy level. OCFW has several statutory duties, all of which revolve around advocacy and equity.

As a former Domestic Violence prosecutor, I strongly support the passage of HB 2933, which would provide the much-needed support to our community-based organizations to provide trauma-informed, culturally-specific, and confidential services to those survivors who are hoping to escape the cycle of Domestic Violence.

During my time as a Domestic Violence prosecutor, I saw over and over how the system lacked the resources we needed to protect and empower those who are seeking to leave abuse. I remember one of the very last cases before I left the DA's office, was that of a 17-year-old, who had been strangled by her partner. The 17-year-old had a 10-month-old baby. And when I spoke to her, she told me she could not seek prosecution because he would kick her out of the house, and she would have nowhere to go because all the resources she had already sought were not available to her. I never heard from her again.

This is unacceptable. We cannot fail these people who seek to leave an abusive environment by not having readily available resources such as shelter, and a path to permanent housing. And the reality is that most of the people who have the highest need for these resources need to do so in a safe environment, a confidential environment, and one that is responsive to their needs. That's where our community-based organizations are able to provide life-saving services to survivors and their children, such that they can have a safer environment and empower themselves to leave. Stable, safe, and secure housing is such a service, it saves lives.

We must strive to do better. Housing should never have been the main reason that 17-year-olds couldn't leave the abusive relationship. I urge every single one of you to realize that domestic violence is so pervasive there everyone in this room either knows a survivor or is a survivor. And for most, those

#### **Oregon Commission for Women**

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stories remain silent because we as a culture still do not encourage speaking out against DV. We need to support our community-based organizations to help the people that need it the most.


Thank you for your time.




Angela M. Rico



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