

Restorative Dialogue Program



Portland
Community
Justice
Partnership



Health. Justice. Hope.

To: Senate Committee On Judiciary

Date: February 8, 2023

RE: Support for SB 586

Dear Committee Members,

I recently began as a dialogue facilitator for Lutheran Community Services Northwest's restorative justice programs. Though I am new to facilitation, I am familiar with the principles and power of restorative justice. Restorative justice process success is often measured by the satisfaction of the participants, and the reduced likelihood of recidivism for those who caused harm. Restorative justice work is much more likely to be successful with the assurance of confidentiality throughout the process.

By allowing for confidentiality in restorative justice work, participants have the freedom to tell the whole truth without fear of legal system processes they have little control over. This freedom and control over their involvement gives power back to survivors. When both survivors and people who have caused harm can tell their story and be honest about what happened and what questions and answers they have for each other, accountability taking and healing can occur. Without confidentiality, both the survivor and person who caused harm are less likely to engage fully in the restorative justice process, which hinders our ability to serve these clients and have successful outcomes.

With confidentiality, survivors can focus on telling their story, getting answers, and giving their input on how the person who harmed them can begin to repair the harm; people who have caused harm can share the larger context of what happened from their perspective, answer questions the survivor poses, take accountability for their actions, and ultimately come up with a way they can repair the harm to the extent possible. Sometimes, just being able to have that honest conversation begins the healing process. Confidentiality gives rise to truth-telling, which in turn begets healing. For this reason, I urge you to pass SB 586 so all Oregonians who engage in restorative justice are maximally benefitted and protected.

Sincerely,

Lily Merrigan