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**We believe that everyone deserves to live a life free from violence.**

February 27, 2023

Co-Chairs Sollman and Evans, and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety,

*Re: \$16 Million in the Department of Justice Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division Budget (SB 5514) for:*

- *\$10 Million to the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund (HB 2933) for confidential safety and support services*
- *\$6 Million to the Survivor Housing Fund (HB 3018) for housing assistance for survivors*

My name is Emmy Ritter and I am the Executive Director of Raphael House of Portland. On behalf of our organization, and our team of advocates who work alongside survivors of domestic violence daily, I am pleased to submit testimony in support of funding in the Department of Justice Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division Budget (SB 5514) of \$10 million to the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services (ODSVS) Fund for confidential safety planning and support services for survivors and \$6 million to the Survivor Housing Fund (SHF) for housing assistance for survivors. Both of these amounts were allocated as one-time funding during the pandemic, and we seek continuation of these programs as on-going and stable services designed to meet critical need.

Raphael House of Portland has been a safe haven for survivors of domestic violence for 45 years. We proudly help families find the long-term safety, stability, and independence they deserve—while also working to prevent future abuse through education. Each year, our programs reach more than 4,229 survivors and community members throughout the Portland Metro area.

ODSVS and Survivor Housing Funds are each essential funding sources that allow Raphael House and a wide network of nonprofit, community-based, and Tribal domestic and sexual violence service providers across the state to ensure that survivors have access to the confidential, culturally-specific, and trauma-informed support they deserve while seeking safety from abuse.

**Re: \$10 Million to Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund (ODSVS) in the CVSSD Budget** *(This funding is also requested in HB 2933 - a bipartisan stand-alone bill.)*

ODSVS is the only state general fund source of support for critical and life-saving services such as safety planning, providing shelter, and confidential trauma-informed advocacy for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, and human trafficking. The need

for these supportive services continues to grow in the wake of the pandemic and many organizations, like ours, are already challenged to meet community need in the face of staffing shortages, lack of funding, and other obstacles.

We know first-hand that investing in the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund (ODSVS) will help programs across the state – including Raphael House of Portland – continue to provide necessary and life-saving services to survivors and their children. We strongly support investing \$10 Million in this critical resource.

**Re: \$6 Million in Oregon Survivor Housing Fund (SHF) in the CVSSD Budget** *(This funding is also requested in HB 3018 - a bipartisan stand-alone bill.)*

The Oregon Survivor Housing Fund (SHF) distributes funds to more than 60 community-based, culturally-specific, and Tribal programs across the state. These funds are a crucial component of our efforts to assist survivors in their journey towards stable, permanent housing.

Domestic violence remains one of the leading causes of homelessness in women and families, and too often survivors face the impossible decision between staying with a dangerous abuser or losing their housing. Further, financial abuse is present in 99% of domestic violence relationships, meaning survivors often have few or no resources available when fleeing abuse.

Renewed investment in SHF would allow domestic and sexual violence programs across the state to continue responding to both the imminent danger of violence and the often-imminent threat of becoming homeless. These funds allow agencies like ours to provide individualized assistance and emergency funds to those who need to move for safety when fleeing an abusive partner, or who need help with housing searches, application processes, landlord negotiations, and tenant education.

We also know that preventing loss of housing in an emergency – as we're able to do with Survivor Housing Funds – is vastly less expensive and disruptive to families than the cost of supporting in the aftermath of homelessness, when they must start over completely. Helping families to maintain their stability is not only life-changing, but also more fiscally sound and efficient.

At Raphael House, we witness daily the truly life-saving impact that this funding has on survivors. In 2022 alone, SHF allowed us to vastly expand our capacity for aiding survivors and their children in maintaining housing and achieving long-term independence. Our housing advocates distribute these resources to help survivors within our wrap-around programs pay for housing-related needs, such as rent.

One survivor who benefitted from this resource was a mother of three who was dependent on public transportation. She was living in hiding when her abuser found her family's location. They had no choice but to flee at a moment's notice, leaving behind virtually all of their worldly possessions. Without this program, they would have had to start over again using only what she could carry on the bus that day. Thanks to the support of Survivor Housing Funds, we were able

to help this family find new housing and move all their belongings. Now they are safe and stable, and can continue focusing on rebuilding their lives after the trauma of abuse.

**In summary, \$16 million in long-term, stable funding for ODSVS (\$10 million) and SHF (\$6 million) – administered by DOJ’s Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division (CVSSD) – will provide programs statewide with the critical resources we need to equitably and sustainably support survivors of interpersonal violence.** Continuation of this one-time funding is necessary to stabilize programs, meet the rising need for life-saving services, and offer wages necessary to recruit and retain skilled advocates and staff.

Domestic and sexual violence agencies across Oregon have proven the vast extent to which these funds are impacting the lives of survivors and their children every day. **We hope you will support an ongoing investment of a \$10 million in ODSVS funds and a continuation of \$6 million in Survivor Housing Funds in the CVSSD Budget.** Full funding of these services is truly essential to support survivors throughout the state.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emmy Ritter', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Emmy Ritter, LCSW (she/her)  
*Executive Director*  
Raphael House of Portland