

March 2, 2023

**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**

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

On behalf of Safety Compass, I am writing to share our organization's enthusiastic support for 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 forms of funding were allocated as one-time offerings during the pandemic, and we have seen the value of these dollars at work. These funds have saved vulnerable families from homelessness in the wake of experiencing disruptions in their homes due to violence and these funds have saved lives. At this time, we request that the critical programs made possible by these dollars be continued and stabilized through sustained funding.

Safety Compass serves four counties in Oregon, providing 24-7 emergency response both in-person and via our hotline, to survivors of sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. We serve more than 300 individuals per year, on average, and are responsible for thousands of follow up contacts with program participants to assist them in fleeing violence and seeking safety. During our initial conversations with people we serve, we assess what their self-determined needs and goals are. Emergency, transitional, and long-term housing access and rental assistance is the number one need identified over and over again. It is clear to us what survivors of domestic and sexual violence need. On-going access to resources articulated through sustained confidential advocacy programming, and support in accessing a safe place to go and ultimately live free of violence.

ODSVS and Survivor Housing Funds are each essential funding sources that allow Oregon's network of nonprofits, community-based, Tribal, and culturally-specific domestic and sexual violence service providers across the state to ensure that survivors have access to confidential, culturally-specific and trauma-informed support and assistance as they seek safety from abuse. \$10 Million to Oregon

Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund (ODSVS) in the CVSSD Budget (This funding is also requested in a bipartisan stand-alone bill, HB 2933)

The Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund (ODSVS) distributes funds to more than 60 community-based, culturally specific and Tribal programs across the state of Oregon to provide confidential trauma-informed services for victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, and human trafficking. These community-based nonprofits support children and adult survivors with wide-ranging crisis intervention and long-term supportive services such as emergency shelter, 24/7 crisis line, legal advocacy, emergency and long-term safety-planning, counseling, support groups and children's programs. These programs also provide prevention education in schools as well as training and education throughout the community. Community-based domestic and sexual violence programs intersect with many state systems, including the public health and public safety systems. These programs have built collaborations with law enforcement, healthcare providers, schools, the criminal justice system, social services agencies, and many other community partners, and offer critical support for survivors navigating these structures.

Every sex-trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation survivor that Safety Compass serves, is also by definition and experience, a sexual violence survivor. Based on their experience with their trafficker, the majority of these survivors are also experiencing domestic violence. Therefore, increased support for ODSVS is critical to our work, and the work of our collaborative partner organizations we regularly refer to.

One example of this is in the life of "Charlotte" (pseudonym for confidentiality) who we met after being called to a scene by a local police department. Charlotte had fled from her trafficker, who she also identified as an intimate partner, who forced her into the sex industry. She shared that this trafficker was also committing regular sexual and domestic violence against her. Charlotte requested advocacy support from Safety Compass while speaking to the police and follow-up contact from the advocate to navigate her exit from the unsafe living situation she was in, through financial assistance provided from these funding streams. The Safety Compass advocate supported Charlotte every step of the way, navigating emergency housing and ultimately assisting in resource referrals so that long term housing was secured. Charlotte is now safe and has been able to flee a human trafficking dynamic to establish safe employment where she is proud to work and her desire is to enter the field of social work one day to become a victim's advocate herself.

ODSVS is the only state general fund source of support for these critical services. The need for these supportive services continues to grow and the burden of essential service provision is challenged by staffing shortages, lack of funding, and other obstacles. We are in support of investing \$10 million for the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund to help programs across the state continue to provide necessary and lifesaving services.

\$6 Million in Oregon Survivor Housing Fund (SHF) in the CVSSD Budget (This funding is also requested in a bipartisan stand-alone bill, HB 3018) The Oregon Survivor Housing Fund (SHF) distributes funds to more than 60 community-based, culturally specific and Tribal programs across the state of Oregon to facilitate access to safe and stable housing for victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, and human trafficking. Survivor Housing Funds are a crucial component of the

efforts to assist survivors in their journey towards stable permanent housing. Survivors often face episodes of homelessness due to the violence, safety issues, and/or isolation caused by the abuser. They often have few or no resources available when fleeing. Because of this, many people don't leave for fear of becoming unhoused and are then faced with staying in dangerous and even lethal situations.

Both in 2019 and 2021, the Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women survivor priority survey found that permanent, affordable housing is the greatest need facing survivors of domestic and sexual violence in our state.

Oregon Survivor Housing Funds (SHF) have been instrumental in supporting survivors and their families in finding safe and permanent housing in the midst of a statewide housing shortage, rise in rent costs, and current inflation. The SHF supports survivors by providing supportive services and the financial assistance resources necessary to address barriers in accessing housing. This may include moving assistance, application fees, security deposits, and other non-rent move-in costs. These critical and flexible funds help survivors begin this new stage in their lives on solid footing. We support an investment of \$6 million in Oregon Survivor Housing Funds to end housing instability for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, stalking and human trafficking.

In closing, \$16 million in long-term stable funding for ODSVS (\$10 million) and SHF (\$6 million) funding, administered by DOJ's Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division (CVSSD), will provide programs with the resources to further develop capacity and build a statewide infrastructure designed for sustainability and equity in meeting the needs of survivors. Continuation of this one-time funding is necessary to stabilize programs, meet the rising need for safety services, and offer wages designed to recruit and retain skilled workers and administrators.

We at Safety Compass sincerely hope you will support an ongoing investment of a \$10 million increase in ODSVS funds and a continuation of \$6 million in Survivor Housing Funds in the CVSSD Budget. Full funding of these services is essential to support crime victims and survivors in Oregon and the organizations and providers who serve them. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Esther Nelson-Garrett

CEO & Founder

Safety Compass