



Oregon Crime Victims Law Center

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**Support for SB 5541
Oregon Youth Authority
March 9, 2023
Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety**

Dear Co-Chair Sollman, Co-Chair Evans, and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Crime Victims Law Center is a nonprofit organization that provides free legal representation to crime victims throughout Oregon. OCVLC attorneys and advocates assist victims with asserting and seeking enforcement of their constitutional and statutory rights in the criminal justice system. We represent a significant number of victims who are involved in the juvenile justice system. The Oregon Constitution guarantees victims a number of important rights, including the right to justice, the right to notice and the right to be heard in certain proceedings. For victims with little to no experience with the criminal justice system, it can be challenging to navigate the system. For those victims trying to navigate the juvenile justice system, those challenges are magnified due to privacy concerns for youthful offenders, lack of transparency about the process, and lack of communication from those who work in the system. It is for this reason that OCVLC supports SB 5541, the Oregon Youth Authority Budget, which includes Crime Survivors Services to Support Victims.

Oregonians who are victimized by youthful offenders have a difficult time just accessing information that is critical to their safety and to recovering from the trauma caused by their victimization. A victim of a youth involved with OYA gets little to no information about the youth's release conditions, conditions of supervision, treatment plan, and living situation, in part because OYA has no victim advocates who can communicate with victims and share relevant information. Victims of adult offenders have advocates in the Department of Corrections, the Parole Board, and in a number of probation departments who are able to share this important information with them. This information should be accessible for all victims and helps to ensure that victims' constitutional rights are upheld. SB 5541 includes funding for two victim advocacy positions, which would ensure that victims have access to information, that victims are able to provide input regarding their safety before release decisions are made, and that victims would receive appropriate notifications from an advocate who has received trauma-informed training.

SB 5541 fills a gap in the juvenile justice system by providing services for victims of youthful offenders, victims who currently face great challenges navigating the system. Passage of SB 5541 would improve the justice system's response to victims of crime, and OCVLC urges your support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Rosemary W. Brewer
Executive Director