



April 11, 2023

**Clackamas County Board of Commissioners
Policy Position
Relating to Strangulation Forensic Evidence Kits**

Clackamas County supports HB 2676: With one in four women and one in seven men experiencing intimate partner violence in their lifetime, domestic violence continues to be a public health emergency. A particularly dangerous type of domestic violence – strangulation – poses potentially life-threatening injuries to the victim.

Strangulation is a strong predictor of future lethality for the victim and harm for the wider community:

- Upwards of 50% of domestic violence victims have also experienced strangulation.
- One study found that 43% of victims of a domestic violence homicide had been strangled in the year preceding the murder.
- Those who have been strangled in the context of domestic violence are seven and a half times more likely to be murdered by their abuser within seven years.

The impact of strangulation has been overlooked due to the frequent lack of visual injury and insufficient training of the medical community. The Clackamas County Strangulation Response Initiative (SRI) developed the Strangulation Forensic Evidence Kit (SKIT), which became available in 2021, to address those barriers. The kit allows a comprehensive examination of survivors and forensic collection of evidence by trained personnel in medical facilities.

Although the SKIT has no cost associated with it, being cared for in the emergency room *does*, especially if scans or tests are needed to assess for damage to the neck and/or brain. Currently a victim can receive compensation for costs associated with a crime perpetrated against them through Crime Victims' Compensation; this is not currently the case for victims of strangulation. These victims too often resist the exam due to the anticipated medical costs that may be beyond their means. No victim should have to make this choice.

HB 2676 would specifically add financial coverage for these strangulation exams to the Crime Victims' Compensation Program, further reducing barriers to victims seeking and receiving necessary medical assessment and interventions.

We urge a "yes" vote on HB 2676.

Please contact Chris Lyons at clyons@clackamas.us for more information.