



April 11, 2023

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Family Justice Center Collaborative strongly supports HB 2676 and its positive impact for crime victims and survivors.

HB 2676 makes needed changes to the Department of Justice crime victim compensation program. These changes include authorizing the program to compensate victims for strangulation and assault exams, protecting survivor confidentiality, expanding counseling eligibility, allows counseling benefits for witnesses, compensation for medication prescribed in conjunction with counseling expenses, and additional supports when a death occurs.

The partners of the Family Justice Center see the devastating impact of costs associated with victimization on a regular basis. Many survivors will decline medically necessary, and at times, lifesaving care due to the fear of being saddled with medical bills. Removing this barrier for survivors will provide them greater access to comprehensive care as well as allow for greater offender accountability.

Exams for survivors of strangulation are not currently covered under Oregon Department of Justice's Crime Victims' Compensation Program. Strangulation is the single greatest predictor of future homicide, with victims 650% more likely to be killed in their next interaction with the abuser. Strangulation can also lead to serious physical, mental, and emotional injury, including permanent brain damage. However, the physical evidence of strangulation cannot normally be seen by the naked eye, and must be medically evaluated and documented, typically engaging a CTA or MRI machine, leading to expensive bills.

Strangulation became a crime in all 50 states only last month, but the investigation of such dangerous assaults needs to be funded with forensic exams at hospitals for the victims. While strangulation is the deadliest form of domestic abuse, the cost of post-assault medical care is a barrier for many victims seeking medical evaluation.

The Oregon Department of Justice's Crime Victims' Compensation Program provides crucial financial support to the victims and survivors of crimes to attend to their medical and emotional needs. The proposed additions to what the program can compensate for will offer victims and survivors a financial lifeline as they navigate the justice system.

Thank you for your consideration in advancing this important measure.



Signed,

Domestic Violence Resource Center

Washington County District Attorney's Office

Beaverton Police Department

Providence Health and Services

Oregon Crime Victims Law Center

Survivor VOICES Committee

Hillsboro Police Department

Victim Rights Law Center

Family Justice Center of Washington County

Together, we can end the cycles of violence and abuse.