

## Testimony by Ashley Beatty Davenport to the Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee

March 5, 2024

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and esteemed members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the topic of Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs), violence prevention and secure storage efforts.

My name is Ashley Beatty Davenport. For the last 9 years, I have had the pleasure of serving Deschutes County as the Victims Assistance Director with the Deschutes County District Attorney's Office. In this capacity, it is my role to provide information and supportive services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, homicide, elder abuse, child abuse and property crimes. Prior to this role, I served the State of Oregon for 12 years in a variety of positions within Child Welfare including CPS worker, Business Analyst, Consultant, Trainer and Supervisor. It is my passion to serve the vulnerable citizens of Oregon and I am honored to speak with you today about the efforts being done to keep our community safe.

As Victim Advocates, we are used to working with Protective Orders, and the Extreme Risk Protective Order is no exception. Since its implementation, I have heard nothing but positive feedback from victims and families of individuals in need of an ERPO. Generally speaking, friends, family members and loved ones are thankful for the ERPO and its ability to temporarily provide relief to their loved one who is struggling. But ERPOs cannot prevent violence alone as it is a singular tool.

In 2015, the High Desert school district led the charge by investing in a Student Threat Assessment Director, Misty Groom. After attending Threat Assessment Training, Mrs Groom, BPD Sgt. Clint Burleigh and myself committed to ensuring the adult threat assessment model would also be implemented in Deschutes County alongside its Student Threat Assessment team, even though there was no funding to support its implementation.

For those of you unfamiliar with threat assessment, it is a criminal justice based multi-disciplinary team which usually includes LE, P&P, mental health, schools, hospitals, DAs and FBI. Members of the team bring individuals of concern who are potentially at risk of committing violence to others. The goal of the team is to prevent violence by mitigating the identified grievance or issue of the subject of concern. Providing this intervention is a unique and individualized process. No one intervention looks the same. Each response is as unique as the individual, which makes the collaboration and teamwork between our agencies so crucial. The ERPO is one of the tools that the team utilizes, when appropriate.

Most teams, like ours, are working without funding or a coordinator. We meet weekly because our individual agencies see the value and recognize the benefit of preventing violence before it happens versus the alternate of responding to the aftermath. We also know that individuals work across jurisdictional lines making information sharing a critical component of success. It is this teamwork and collaboration that can also make provide the foundational knowledge for determining an ERPO is necessary. For example, if an individual has a singular incident with law enforcement in which violence ideation is discussed, that may not be concerning. You add information from the neighboring jurisdiction

that the mother of the subject is reporting an increase in mental instability and he has been purchasing firearms. Now we look at that singular contact with law enforcement differently.

I am a member of both our Student Threat Assessment and Adult Threat Assessment Teams. While ERPOS are not utilized in the Student Team, we can see the nexus between students with a desire to commit violence and parents who own firearms, which can provide the student means to commit violence. In these instances, it has become incredibly important to utilize secure storage mechanisms to support parents in their desire to keep their children safe while maintaining their firearms.

The adult threat assessment team utilizes ERPOS much more than the student team. As you are aware, Deschutes County is already one of the highest utilizers of ERPOS statewide. The State of the Courts report for Deschutes County reports a 115% increase in ERPO hearings within the last year. This increase in ERPO utilization has placed a strain on the agencies whose primary goal is to investigate and respond to incidents of violence. They are tasked with tracking these orders and ensuring officers are prepared for court, on top of their duties. Now imagine you are the parent or child of the individual who the ERPO is on and you were the person who applied. Would you have the ability to go to court and present a case against your love one? There needs to be support for these individuals.

There are numerous state funded services available that would benefit violence prevention and individuals with an ERPO, but those services go unutilized because counties don't know about them. One example of this is funding for secure storage efforts, but those are primarily being utilized by suicide prevention staff. These services can and should also be utilized by violence prevention teams.

One of the reasons Deschutes County is as successful in its ERPO usage is thanks to Jake, Kecia and their work educating law enforcement, but is also because of the multi-disciplinary support in these cases. After an ERPO is applied for, we are trying to support that individual access support. Our team feels this is a critical piece of the intervention and isn't highlighted in current efforts.

In summation, I am here to testify that there are many instances in which the current ERPO law is working. We are helping save lives. But, there are several actions that you could take to support communities in their violence prevention efforts:

- Provide funding to support the efforts of violence prevention/ Threat Assessment Teams in their communities. One way to so this would be to create regional based Violence Prevention Managers who could streamline/oversee violence prevention services while supporting the efforts of local threat assessment teams
- Create a formal mechanism for Threat Assessment Teams to track data and share information
- Provide funding to support access to training and community outreach regard ERPOs and violence prevention
- Create a more formal tracking and reporting mechanism for ERPOS, which will provide accountability to those who receive an ERPO