



Dear Chair Kropf, Vice Chairs Andersen and Wallan, and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB 4123. My name is Martina Shabram and I am the Executive Director of Sexual Assault Support Services of Lane County. We strongly urge you to pass HB 4123 to help ensure that all survivors of sexual violence will receive the care they need in the aftermath of assault. We know that every survivor of sexual assault deserves accessible, trauma-informed, skilled medical care in the wake of experiencing this unique form of victimization – a robust SANE Certification Commission is critical for making that happen.

For over 30 years, SASS has been providing support to survivors, including while they are receiving acute post-assault care in emergency departments. As one of only two agencies in Oregon that exclusively address sexual violence, SASS is uniquely positioned to speak to how critical this care is for survivors. In Lane County, SASS Advocates are the team called to support every person who seeks emergency medical and forensic services in the acute aftermath of sexual violence. Working in partnership with Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs), SASS Advocates provide confidential, trauma-informed support as survivors navigate that difficult time. SANEs are specifically trained to provide the medical and forensic care that survivors need. In doing so, they hold a pivotal role in improving safety, justice, and healing for survivors across Oregon. SASS Advocates are not medical practitioners, so we have the honor of being present solely to support the survivor, whether that be by holding their hand, helping them make safety plans, informing them about their options, or anything else they need to make it through. And we can't do this without skilled and caring SANEs. Because of this unique vantage point, we can say with certainty that well trained, well resourced, and well supported SANEs are critical for a survivor's health, safety, and healing. That's why I support the creation of an ongoing, dedicated state funding source for the SANE Certification Commission (SCC).

On behalf of myself and all of SASS's Advocates, I urge you to support HB 4123 to ensure access to certified SANEs for survivors of sexual assault and professional support for Oregon's SANE workforce. Funding for HB 4123 provides stable foundational funding for the management of the SCC, whose duties include overseeing competency and standards of care for the provision of sexual assault forensic exams, reviewing and certifying new and renewal certification applications, and ensuring that SANE response is coordinated with other key partners in the response to sexual assault, including advocates, law enforcement, and prosecutors. Medical forensic exams conducted by SANEs not only meet essential medical needs for survivors but are also critical in the evidence collection process for use in investigations and prosecutions of sexual assaults when a survivor chooses to report to law enforcement. SANEs protect survivors' rights and needs, so it's no wonder that research has shown that the presence of a qualified SANE increases the likelihood that survivors will engage with a broader range of support services, including legal, medical, and psychological resources.

Now more than ever, our community needs a medical workforce that we can count on. Eugene lost its only emergency department in December 2023. The negative ripple effects of this closure are manifold, and they are compounded by the damage that Covid-19 has done to medical services nationwide. Medical staff are overburdened, under-supported, and stretched to their limits. Since the closure, we've seen crowding, increased wait times, lack of access to basic needs like food, and more. In conditions like these, more

survivors will choose to walk away from the care they need, hindering their healing and also inhibiting the legal system's ability to respond. In times like these, failing to adequately safeguard the pipeline of qualified SANEs does an immense disservice to survivors.

Finally, as the leader of an agency primarily funded through state and federal grants, I can tell you from personal experience just how disruptive it is to be forced to rely on one-time, temporary funding. Such funding sources are ill-suited to the development of sustainable, resilient programming. Not having stable and predictable funding increases employee turnover, which ultimately costs more money, and inhibits long-term planning, growth, and quality improvement. This is not how we create a stronger, more robust safety net of providers.

In closing, we are asking you to support survivors of sexual assault and the SANE workforce that cares for them by passing HB 4123. The current number of certified SANEs in Oregon is critically low, and investment in the SCC will support outreach and training to recruit and certify new SANEs, while also supporting the existing workforce as they respond to the ongoing crisis of sexual assault in Oregon. An investment in the SCC is an investment in healing and survivor-centered response services across our state.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martina Shabram', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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