

Co-Chairs, Vice-Chairs, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shelby Miller and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Henderson House (If you are writing on behalf of an organization, give the name of organization) to urge support of funding for the specialized programs that support survivors of domestic and sexual violence and their children in the Department of Justice Budget's POP 327 and in HB 3196.

I first heard about Henderson House during my third call to a crisis line. The lady suggested I reach out to Henderson House and speak to an advocate. Over the next few months, I met with my advocate many times while planning my exit from my abusive marriage. I was able to meet with my lawyer in a private area of Henderson House, set up my safety plan, and get information about services that could help me. The day my ex was served divorce paperwork, things got very scary, and I had to grab my kids and run. While waiting for my court date, I had nowhere else to go, so I feel so fortunate to have been able to stay at Henderson House's safe house. They provided shelter, support, and space for me to begin rebuilding my life essentially from scratch. I had very little money, a few bags of clothes and things, my car that needed work, and my children. My advocate helped me plan and work through my overwhelming list of things I needed to do, to rebuild my life and create a stable and safe home for me and my kids. They helped me find services to get housing and financial assistance and emotional support through the hardest year of my life. When I got into my apartment, they donated basic kitchen and bathroom supplies and connected me with organizations that donated furniture and clothes for my kids. They helped me through emergencies and struggles dealing with services and court dates and gave me space and comfort when I needed to just vent and cry. I don't know where I would be without Henderson House. The emotional support I found there and the connections I've made with other survivors have saved me when I've been at my lowest and kept me going. I've had the opportunity to work on myself through the support groups and parenting classes offered at Henderson House. I was inspired to return to college and work towards a degree that will help me give back to the community that saved me. I've found purpose and comfort in volunteering in advocacy and with events to help support other survivors through their journeys whenever I can. Having to ask for help is not easy and being turned down makes it even worse. The help and support I've found at Henderson House made the difference in my survival and strength to keep going.

The Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division of the Department of Justice provides critical safety net services and programs that can quite literally save the lives of survivors and their children fleeing violence and seeking safety and security.

The two packages outlined below are of critical importance to the lives of survivors and their children:

Department of Justice Budget POP 327: ONGOING FUNDING TO STABILIZE CRITICAL SURVIVOR SERVICES PROGRAMS (\$22M)

Please ensure the inclusion of \$22 million in grant funding in the Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division (CVSSD) of the Department of Justice for Tribal, culturally specific, and community-based programs to continue providing confidential services to victims of domestic and sexual violence, stalking, and human trafficking across the state. Without this investment into ongoing funding, programs will be forced to lay off staff and will have reduced capacity to provide critical life-saving safety and advocacy services for survivors and their children.

\$10 Million for ODSVS: These funds provide support for the network of confidential, trauma-informed, community-based and culturally-specific programs providing shelter, safety planning, hotline, and advocacy services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence (DSV) and their children across the state.

\$6 Million for the Survivor Housing Fund: Survivor Housing Funds allow DVSA service providers to empower survivors in the next step of accessing safety from violence. These funds increase the chances at long-term stability and safety for survivors and their children. As Oregon's housing affordability crisis continues to reach new peaks, the Survivor Housing Funds are necessary to make it possible for victims to escape the cycle of abuse, and to establish stability for themselves and their children.

\$6 Million for Children's Advocacy Centers: CACs are the state's mandated and unique resource for the assessment, treatment, and prevention of child abuse and neglect and the associated trauma, in order to promote health and hope in children, youth, families, and communities.

These investments are necessary to continue current levels of survivor services that were finally brought up to baseline minimal access levels in 2019 thru one-time investments. In 2024, the Legislature recognized the importance of this increased capacity and unanimously passed HB 4140, which stated that these funds are to be considered current service level moving forward. If these investments are not continued, survivor services in communities across the state will suffer significant cuts. POP #327 cements the continuation of these funds.

One-Time Funding to Prevent Cuts to Interdisciplinary Victim Services Programs (\$18.5 Million as in HB 3196)

The Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) is the primary source of federal grants for victim services, including services for survivors of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, stalking, trafficking, attempted homicide, and other crimes. Oregon was notified of the 42% in federal funding cuts following the close of the 2024 short Session. We need a one-time investment to continue important partnerships between service providers, prosecutors, law enforcement, and others serving victims of crime in every county in the state.

Henderson House provides an immeasurable contribution to my community. From sitting with you while you cry to support through court dates and restraining orders, they are the only place to go for many of us in need. The support groups and parenting classes help us work through rebuilding our lives and working through life-altering trauma. Allowing survivors to have this community and support when they need it is about life and death for some of us. It's where we can go in the hardest moments of our lives and find a path to survival and more. This investment in support of survivors has huge returns and can save lives. The connections made expand into many areas of need and development in the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,

Shelby Miller

Henderson House client, Domestic Violence Survivor, and Advocate Volunteer.