

Submitter: Mollie Montague
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB710

Honorable members of the Oregon House Committee on Judiciary:

I offer our support for SB 710, which would allow for the creation of continuing education, including trauma-informed education, for criminal justice professionals. As you may be aware, RAINN is the nation's largest anti-sexual assault organization. Founded in 1994, RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800.656.HOPE and hotline.rainn.org). RAINN also carries out programs to support victims, educate the public, and improve public policy.

The experience of sexual violence lasts a lifetime and profoundly impacts a person's behavior and neurology. Unfortunately, at many crucial junctures in the justice process, victims face professionals who lack the training to understand how the trauma of sexual violence impacts the victim. This contributes to the significant attrition in sexual assault cases that proceed through the justice system. Five to twenty forcible rapes out of 100 will be reported and prosecutors will only pursue a fraction of these. Trauma-informed training for criminal justice professionals helps foster an environment where survivors want to seek justice.

Trauma-informed training allows criminal justice professionals to conduct more efficient investigations and close cases by training them to accurately evaluate evidence, connect with witnesses, and identify the impact of trauma on victims. Trained professionals play a crucial role in supporting survivors of sexual violence by creating an environment that acknowledges and responds to the pervasive effects of trauma. By prioritizing empathy, understanding of the neurological effects of traumatic events, and sensitivity to how these effects manifest, these practices help practitioners create a safe and trustworthy legal process. This approach encourages more survivors to come forward and report incidents in an environment that survivors often otherwise find alienating or re-traumatizing.

SB 710 would create an avenue by which the state justice system may implement trauma-informed education. This training would empower those interfacing with survivors with the skills to understand the behavior of all parties in a case. Knowing the impact trauma-informed education can have, we believe this bill will contribute to better outcomes of emotional healing and legal resolution. Ultimately, trauma-informed practices not only empower survivors but also contribute to a more equitable and effective justice system.

We urge your support for SB 710. Thank you for your continued leadership and for supporting victims of sexual violence in Oregon.