



May 12, 2025

Re: Support HB 2492-A

Good afternoon, Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee,

My name is Melissa Erlbaum, and I am here on behalf of Clackamas Women's Services in strong support of **House Bill 2492A**. This thoughtful and necessary change better reflects the lived reality of survivors and enhances public safety by ensuring accountability for those who violate court orders meant to protect.

As an organization that has supported survivors of violence for 40 years, we know from direct experience that the path to healing, stability, and justice is not short. Survivors of domestic violence often spend years navigating trauma, securing safe housing, establishing financial independence, and rebuilding trust in systems that have too often failed to protect them. The ripple effects of violence can stretch across lifetimes—for individuals, families, and entire communities.

Given that reality, it is not too much to ask that we extend the waiting period for expungement of these serious violations.

Protective orders are not symbolic—they are often the only legal tool a survivor has to create a boundary between themselves and someone who has caused them harm. When that boundary is violated, it can retraumatize survivors, reignite fear, and jeopardize hard-won steps toward safety. Violations of protective orders erode survivors' sense of security and stability. The emotional toll is immense: survivors often describe being constantly on edge, sleeping with lights on, or avoiding work or public places for fear of another encounter.

These violations also impact access to services. When a survivor experiences a protection order violation, it often leads to crisis-level disruptions: they may need emergency shelter, advocacy in court, or safety planning for their children. Violations can also affect employment, as survivors may miss work or even lose their jobs because of the trauma and safety concerns. In rural or smaller communities, a perpetrator that does not adhere to a court order can force a survivor to relocate entirely, severing them from support networks, jobs, and schools.

Expunging these violations after only one year effectively erases key information from the legal record—information that is critical not only for survivors but for courts, advocates, and service providers. It hampers risk assessments during bail hearings, undermines custody and visitation decisions, and weakens our ability to respond to future harm. For survivors, it sends the message that their experience is temporary, that the protection they sought was conditional.

A five-year waiting period recognizes the seriousness of protection order violations and provides survivors a more meaningful window of time to pursue safety and healing. It ensures the justice system continues to acknowledge and remember what they have endured, and it reinforces that violations of court orders are not simply paperwork—they are potential precursors to escalating violence.

Survivors deserve time and they deserve systems that respond with the gravity and care their experiences demand.

We urge your support of HB 2492A and thank you for your continued leadership on behalf of survivors across Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Melissa Erlbaum".

Melissa Erlbaum
Executive Director