



February 5th, 2026

### **Support for SB 1550 – Identifying Hidden Homicides**

**Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1550 on behalf of the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. OCADSV, founded in 1978, is a coalition of 52 member organizations working together to end and prevent domestic and sexual violence in Oregon.

Thank you to Senator Gelser for bringing this bill forward and to Kellee Harris for her brave leadership on this issue.

SB 1550 addresses a devastating and too-often overlooked reality: some deaths classified as suicide, overdose, or accident are, in fact, domestic violence and sexual violence–related homicides.

A common trauma response to Domestic and sexual violence is prior suicidal ideation or attempts, a vulnerability that those who cause harm may exploit to conceal lethal violence. As documented in the materials before you, these misclassified deaths—known as “Hidden Homicides”—represent a profound failure of systems meant to protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

Nonfatal strangulation, coercive control, and threats of self-harm or homicide are among the strongest predictors of future lethal violence. When a known victim of domestic violence is found dead under suspicious circumstances, failure to recognize these warning signs can mean that a homicide is never identified. This leaves no room for accountability, community safety, or closure and healing for affected communities.

The key provisions of this bill:

- Requires more thorough investigations and autopsies when multiple red flags of domestic violence or child abuse are present;
- Ensures families are notified of their rights to request records, autopsies, and inquests;
- Clarifies access to medical examiner records, including photos and videos, so families can seek independent review when appropriate; and
- Allow for independent review when a death is closed without a homicide determination.

As you have heard from both written and oral testimony these provisions matter deeply to survivors and their families. Too often, families tell us they were excluded from the process, denied information, or dismissed when they raised concerns about a loved one's abusive partner. SB 1550 helps restore trust by centering transparency, accountability, and due process.

Across the state there is the need for systems to consider the patterns of power and control used in not only domestic violence but also sexual assault and apply these facts when a survivor of these types of violence is found dead under suspicious circumstances. SB 1550 addresses a gap in our justice system when it comes to applying knowledge about abuse tactics to outcomes that result in the death of a survivor. This is a good fix to move us in the direction of accountability and healing for communities when we lose loved ones to domestic and sexual violence.

Thank you for your time and your considerations on this important matter.



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