



Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force

Joint Committee on Capitol Culture

Re: SB744 and HB2859

February 6, 2019

Chairs Burdick and Williamson, Vice-Chairs Knopp and Wilson, and Members of the Capitol Culture Committee,

On behalf of The Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force, we are writing in response to SB744 and HB2859, addressing investigative and supportive measures for individuals experiencing harassment.

The Sexual Assault Task Force is a private, non-profit, non-governmental statewide agency with over 100 multi-disciplinary members appointed by Attorney General Rosenblum. Members serve as advisors on 1 of 8 subcommittees including: Campus, Criminal Justice, Legislative & Public Policy, Medical-Forensic, Men's Engagement, Offender Management, Prevention Education, and Victim Response.

Our mission is to advance a multi-disciplinary, survivor-centered approach to the prevention of and response to sexual violence in Oregon. Our goal is to prevent sexual violence from happening in the first place, while simultaneously improving our response efforts to mitigate trauma and ensure the safety and security of all victims.

We have significant respect and appreciation for the voluminous task that the Oregon Law Commission undertook in developing policy recommendations to support a safe work environment at the Capitol. We highly support their recommendation for a confidential reporting option and services. We, however, respectfully offer a friendly amendment to the provision of confidential support provided by a *Principal Outreach Officer*.

In an effort to emphasize the need for clear boundaries of confidentiality, we recommend offering an external Confidential Advocate who is specially trained to address the unique needs presented by each individual seeking redress. Advocates receive significant training on serving individuals who experience harassment and acts of abuse and violence; they are uniquely situated to provide safety planning, access critical resources and information, and assist individuals in navigating the dynamics of power and control present in a workplace setting.

In an effort to reduce barriers to reporting and increase privacy for individuals seeking services, we want to reiterate and offer our full support of section 1(6)(b) of SB744, ensuring that a confidential support be placed externally from the Capitol. Placing the position in the building may in itself be a barrier to reporting. We believe the spirit of SB744 and HB2859 is to ensure that any individual seeking assistance as a result of harassment and violence is that they are able to fully disclose their experience without fear of retaliation or having their information shared, while simultaneously receiving the supportive measures and investigative action they are seeking. We are grateful to the legislature for passing victim-advocate privilege in 2017 via ORS 40.264, and believe the appropriate course of action is to align SB744 and HB2859 with an already established and accessible mechanism of support available in our state.

Thank you for your leadership on this very important issue and for considering our recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MRS", written in a cursive style.

Michele Roland-Schwartz
Executive Director