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We believe that everyone deserves to live a life free from violence.

March 14, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety

We are writing to urge you to show up for survivors by doubling down on your support for Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services (ODSVS) funding. ODSVS is the only general fund dedicated to domestic and sexual violence programming in the state. This funding is a critical resource to support life-saving services including emergency shelter, safety planning, and confidential advocacy throughout Oregon. Our agency, Raphael House of Portland, is one of only three emergency domestic violence shelters in Multnomah County. All three shelters are always full with families and individuals fleeing abuse. In 2017, 8,325 requests for emergency shelter from violence could not be met because of a lack of funding and space. That's almost one unmet request every hour of every day of the entire year. Without access to emergency shelter and support, survivors are faced with the impossible choice between homelessness for their family and staying or returning to an abusive home.

Raphael House depends on ODSVS funding to help operate and maintain our shelter, which has served as a temporary home to thousands of individuals and families over the past 42 years.

However, current ODSVS funding levels only cover about 25% of the operating costs for the shelter - things like water and electric bills, heat in the winter, insurance, upkeep and repairs. These are the unglamorous expenses it takes to run a shelter day to day, and our remaining 75% must be paid for with funds raised from the community, which would be better used expanding services and shelter. An increase in funding will not only help keep our lights on and ensure families are safe, but allow our programs to reach more people and provide a critical cushion in a time when some federal funding feels uncertain.

For many survivors, shelter can be a life changing and life-saving step. Some of our participants recently reflected on their time with us:

"Raphael House has helped turn my life around. My kids are safe and I am safe thanks to you guys and we are working on bettering our future. I felt safe while I lived here and that gave me the mindset I needed to make the right choices."

"I have been blessed within the walls of the Raphael House shelter. Thank you for a new beginning and hopeful future. I will always pay this forward and support in whatever way I can."

Please support domestic and sexual violence service providers in continuing to do our vital work supporting survivors throughout Oregon. Double down on ODSVS with a 10 million dollar increase. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lindsey Vold
Youth and Advocacy Services Manager
Raphael House of Portland

www.raphaelhouse.com