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The Honorable Representative Jennifer Williamson, Chair
House Judiciary Committee, Members

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2657

Dear Chair Williamson, Vice Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and Members of the
Committee:

My name is Katherine Gotch and I am an Oregon Licensed Professional Counselor and Certified Clinical Sex Offender Therapist who specializes in the evaluation and treatment of individuals who have sexually abused or are at risk to abuse. I have worked in the field of sexual abuse prevention for 18 years and currently serve as the Public Policy Executive Board Representative for the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA), a Board Member and co-chair of the Policy Action Team for the National Partnership to End Interpersonal Violence (NPEIV), and the Policy Advisor for the Oregon ATSA Chapter.

Sexual and domestic violence are complex issues which impact everyone – individuals, communities, institutions and society as a whole. These and all forms of interpersonal violence are a public health crisis which should be responded to as such. However, current responses typically focus on intervention and prevention *after* violence has occurred. It is time we focus on interpersonal violence as a public health issue and direct our efforts on the prevention of sexual and domestic violence *before* it is perpetrated.

HB 2657 does just that – it will assist Oregon in the development of primary prevention programming by establishing dedicated funding to implement violence prevention education in K-12 and other community settings. Further development and dedicated funding for violence prevention programs will only benefit Oregon and its citizens through the promotion of healthy relationships, teaching bystander intervention skills, promoting norms change, and preventing sexual harassment, sexual assault, intimate partner abuse, and other forms of interpersonal violence.

Primary prevention is key to the eradication of sexual and domestic violence within our communities and society as a whole. Research has clearly shown the long-term fiscal, societal and personal costs of interpersonal violence on our citizens and communities. Yet numerous studies have also shown the fiscal, societal and personal benefits of primary prevention strategies. We can either continue to be reactive in our responses to interpersonal violence or we can choose to be proactive and stop harm before it occurs. I strongly support HB 2657 as it provides Oregon the opportunity to be proactive in responding to interpersonal violence through further development and implementation of primary prevention strategies. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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