



Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force

**Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
Testimony in Support of SB5512
Submitted by: Michele Roland-Schwartz, Executive Director
March 25, 2019**

Co-Chair Manning, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of The Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force, **I write to urge your support of SB5512**, which would prevent and help end homelessness by investing in the Emergency Housing Account (EHA), the State Homeless Assistance Program (SHAP) and the domestic and sexual violence Housing Navigator program. This critical investment would **alleviate some of the disproportionate burden that homelessness has on victims of sexual assault in Oregon.**

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.

People who experience homelessness also experience high levels of sexual violence. This is particularly true for women, people of color, and LGBTQ youth who experience disproportionately higher rates of violence¹. The precarious nature of housing instability, caused by drastic rent increases and no cause evictions, increases the likelihood of sexual violence. Victims are more likely to experience sexual violence perpetrated by someone they know; and for homeless women and youth, this is typically by someone they go to for help. This is often in the form of forced, coerced, or manipulated sexual activity in exchange for survival, such as access to a shower, a couch to sleep on, or food and other life-saving needs. Perpetrators choose victims based on their vulnerability, their accessibility, and their perceived lack of credibility – and these are often the same individuals who experience increased barriers to reporting and access to services. This is particularly troubling in Oregon, where sexual violence against women is the second highest in the country (after Alaska).²

Passage and implementation of SB5512 would provide protection for the most vulnerable in our community, and reduce the rates of sexual violence experienced as a result of housing and homelessness. For these reasons, we urge your support of SB5512. Thank you for your consideration of this critical issue.

¹ Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence, Stalking, and Intimate Partner Violence Victimization— National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/summaryreports.html>

² *ibid*