

Date: March 28, 2019

Re: Support HB 2657

Dear Chair Williamson, Vice Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Brian Maher, VP Board of Directors, Clackamas Women's Service's

Violence is preventable. Yet Oregon has one of the highest rates of domestic and sexual violence in the nation, with approximately 1 million women and girls — nearly half of those in the state — affected in their lifetime (Oregon Women's Foundation Count Her In Report, 2016). At least one in six of all men in Oregon experience sexual violence.

Prevention programs promote healthy relationships, teach bystander intervention skills, and promote change in social norms and the prevention of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and dating and interpersonal violence. In our community, prevention educators, through Clackamas Women's Services (CWS), address the root causes of violence, shift community norms, are trained to respond to disclosures, and work in partnership with schools, as well as intervention and crisis services, and help build thriving, safe, and healthy communities.

Without a dedicated source of funding, Sexual and Domestic Violence Programs like CWS are caught in the bind of constantly having to respond to crises without having resources to stop this violence before it ever occurs. While we have made many positive strides to improve our prevention and response efforts, our communities across Oregon lack infrastructure, technical assistance, and resources to fully implement and sustain effective violence prevention education. Your support for HB 2657 will change this by funding comprehensive violence prevention.

In the Oregon Student Violence Report, 42% of students report believing there is not an atmosphere of trust and respect at school. Youth who experience dating or sexual violence have higher rates of suicidal thoughts and other health consequences such as anxiety and depression, difficulty concentrating and a loss of hope.

In Oregon counties where a prevention and education program exists the following results have been reported:

- 59% of students reported an increased knowledge of healthy communication skills and awareness of how they communicate with others.
- 76% of students reported increased knowledge regarding signs of an unhealthy relationship.
- 54% of students were less likely to experience victimization by a dating partner.

The solution is clear. We must invest in violence prevention education to address the epidemic of domestic and sexual violence in Oregon. The path forward is clear, programs across the state are poised to act, schools are eager to provide this much needed education...a funding stream dedicated to violence prevention education will achieve long term positive impacts on the problem of sexual and domestic violence in Oregon.

