



Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women

Support HB 2657 Funding for Comprehensive Violence Prevention March 29th, 2019 House Judiciary Committee

Founded in 1999, the Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women (the Alliance) is a grassroots organization of survivors, advocates, multi-disciplinary community and system-based responders, and allies. The Alliance is dedicated to promoting legislation in Oregon that will protect and empower survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

HB 2657 would provide \$3 million in dedicated violence prevention funding to ensure greater capacity for community-based domestic and sexual violence programs, culturally-specific victim services programs, and tribal victim services programs to implement violence prevention education in K-12 and other community settings.

Dating violence and sexual assault are pervasive and systemic problems for Oregon's youth. More than half of Oregon rape victims are under 17 years old. This is a problem that affects boys as well as girls: One in ten high school students has been purposefully hit, slapped, or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend. These statistics are reflected at the national level: Approximately one in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner, according to the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (2008).

There is a strong correlation between teen dating violence and future health and social problems. Teens who are victims are more likely than their non-abused peers to smoke, use drugs, engage in risky sexual behaviors, and attempt or consider suicide.¹ Teens who are victims of physical dating violence are more likely to do poorly in school, or to skip school entirely because they feel unsafe. The severity of adult intimate partner violence is often greater in cases where the pattern of abuse was established in adolescence.

Without dedicated funding for prevention efforts, the need for crisis response overwhelms staff resources. Oregon's network of community-based victim services programs have the expertise to provide effective prevention outreach and education, but these programs are overwhelmed by the need for emergency crisis-response. Oregon has one of the highest rates of sexual violence in the nation. Most communities lack the infrastructure, technical assistance, and resources to dedicate staff time away from crisis response to fully implement effective violence prevention education.

Prevention programs work: Pilot projects in 2017-2018 in 7 Oregon counties produced excellent results, showing that students reported increased knowledge regarding signs of an unhealthy relationship, were less likely to commit or be victims of sexual violence, and were more able to identify ways to support and show respect for people of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations.

Please support HB 2657 to ensure that young people across our state have access to prevention education that will increase the health and safety of all Oregon communities.