

April 16, 2019

Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education  
c/o Co-Chairs Senator Lew Frederick and Representative Susan McLain  
*Submitted electronically*

RE: HB 5024, Higher Education Coordinating Committee (HECC) budget bill

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing this letter to support continued funding for the University of Oregon Domestic Violence Clinic (DV Clinic). A key factor in my decision to come to the University of Oregon was the ability to be able to learn and practice real world skills with the clinics. I came to law school wanting to practice criminal law, but with an openness to taking classes in other areas of the law, which is why I registered for the DV Clinic. The Domestic Violence Clinic has opened my eyes to new possibilities for post-grad opportunities and has been the single most rewarding learning experience for real trial practice skills.

Many of the other opportunities offered at the University of Oregon do not bring the same depth of knowledge as the DV Clinic. The Clinic also has the added benefit of serving low-income community survivors. I have been fortunate to be able to take on my own cases from intake all the way through trial prep and to the actual hearing date. Through that experience I was able to learn the black letter law through the weekly class seminar, but I was also able to learn about the real-life information and implications that are presented in these cases. Being present with clients through this process, learning and implementing the law in advocating for them and their safety, and also seeing the real-life issues that arise is just not something that a class alone can replace.

The Domestic Violence Clinic has also given a valuable resource to low-income communities who deal with all the issues that arise from domestic violence but also have the secondary barrier of financial matters. One of the most troubling but also heartwarming memory I have of the clinic is having a client tell me after we settled her case in court, that our Clinic was the first actor that actually cared about her and her safety. That the DV Clinic was the first to actually take on her problems and everything that came with it and still advocated for her. This type of sentiment is easily seen and very common amongst our low-income clients in the Clinic. The continuity of the HECC funding makes this type of resource to the low-income community and the experience for law students viable. Therefore, I respectfully ask that you continue to fund the Domestic Violence Clinical Legal Education Fund.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fernanda Douglas', written in a cursive style.

Fernanda Douglas  
University of Oregon, Domestic Violence Clinic Student