

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 2575
Before the House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on
Equitable Policing
March 3rd, 2021**

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chair Noble, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2575, which would complement the state's efforts to establish best practices in responding to the needs of crime victims.

OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. A significant number of our clients come to us for help as they are struggling to escape or recover from domestic or sexual violence. Domestic and sexual violence are serious public health and safety issues in our state. Victims suffer great psychological, emotional, and physical trauma, which have long-term impact on their lives. Domestic and sexual violence greatly contribute to the vulnerability of our clients, and further trap them in poverty and crisis. OLC is committed to supporting the coordinated community response necessary to help prevent this violence, and to helping victims in crisis move towards the safety and stability they need for recovery in the aftermath of crime.

Survivors of traumatic events experience a wide variety of impacts that can have both immediate and long-lasting consequences. Often, survivors experience memory loss, hypervigilance, disorientation, and other impacts that if not understood in context can lead observers to make false assumptions and conclusions about the victim. This is true not only of survivors of domestic or sexual violence, but of anyone experiencing crisis. These impacts are verified health consequences of trauma and it is critical that our system responders be well informed.

It is well-documented that trauma is experienced through the lens of an individual's personal and community history.¹ Life-long experiences of bias, interpersonal racism and systemic racism manifest in myriad and cumulative ways. Multi-generational and historical trauma must be taken into account. Understanding this intersectionality is necessary to ensure effective and trauma-informed response from any system or service provider.

Law enforcement plays a vital role in the way a crime victim experiences the criminal justice system, in two important ways:

- 1) The survivor's perception of the system. Often, a law enforcement officer may be the first person to interact with a victim in the aftermath of a traumatic event. And law enforcement officers, investigators, and others have continuing interaction with crime survivors throughout the pendency of a case. If the victim receives trauma-informed response, they are more likely to feel heard, respected, and valued during the process. This very well may make the difference between life and death.
- 2) The quality of the criminal justice process. If officers are trained in trauma-response, interviews and investigations are less likely to be thrown off course and more likely

¹ <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4816.pdf>

to effectively result in the gathering of important evidence. In this way, the process is more likely to result in appropriate accountability for perpetrators, and effective safety protection to meet the needs of crime victims.

HB 2575 was collaboratively developed with public safety partners and survivor advocates to take an important first step in setting best practices for statewide response, taking into account the impact of structural racism and other forms of historical trauma. The bill tasks DPSST, in consultation with DOJ and other partners, to develop model protocols, and provides funding for pilot project implementation of protocols.

Moving forward, it will be important to ensure that protocols for best practice include training for responders at all levels within a system – first responders, investigators, detectives, and others. Each of these roles plays a critical part in the development of a case and in the victim’s experience. HB 2575 has the potential to lead Oregon forward in ensuring high quality and equitable access to system response for all crime victims.

For the above reasons, we urge support of this bill, and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,

Sybil Hebb

