



**Testimony in support of HB 2825  
House Committee on Judiciary  
Submitted by Kerry Naughton, Co-Director  
March 23, 2021**

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kerry Naughton and I am the Co-Director of Oregon Abuse Advocates & Survivors in Service (OAASIS). OAASIS is a statewide organization that empowers communities to prevent child sexual abuse and help survivors live full, healthy, joyful lives. Our base is comprised of thousands of Oregonians—people who were sexually abused as children, survivors’ family members and loved ones, and community members who care about the safety, health, and well-being of survivors of child sexual abuse. We are working towards a future where all people experience a loving childhood free of abuse and trauma, and all relationships are based on respect, consent, and equity.

**We are pleased to support HB 2825, which will treat survivors of domestic violence with more dignity and fairness.**

HB 2825 allows important context about domestic violence to be present at sentencing. Experiencing domestic violence is a common pathway from victimization to crime. When an abuser is controlling access to finances, has threatened the safety of a survivor’s children or other loved ones, has made it challenging for survivor to keep or maintain a job; a survivor’s safest option is often to do what the perpetrator is telling them to do. That is how survivors stay alive from moment to moment or stay physically or emotionally safe. From the outside it may be challenging to understand, but for survivors, saying “no” is often not an option because they know that the consequences will be.

In OAASIS’s decade of working with survivors of child sexual abuse, we’ve learned from survivors that the response to abuse can be as impactful as the abuse itself. Many survivors grapple with the question: “Why me?” This can take the form of “why did the offender choose to harm me” or “what did I do that led to the abuse.” These are natural neuroscientific responses to trauma that are rooted in a brain’s quest to find understanding and create a coherent narrative about the trauma to regain a greater sense of safety and control. When a crime is committed because the person responsible for the crime was themselves in an untenable experience of violence, abuse, and continued harm, this context can provide greater understanding to anyone harmed by the survivor-defendant. And it can provide the court and corrections system needed information to help the survivor-defendant to process the trauma of the domestic violence and rebuild their life.

**A one-size-fits-all approach to sentencing is not appropriate for survivor-defendants.** Considering the complex dynamics and trauma of domestic violence during sentencing is in the best interest of survivors of domestic violence, their families, and the community.

We hope you'll join us in supporting HB 2825. Thank you for your time and consideration.