

Co-Chair Leiber, Co-Chair Nosse, and members of the Sub-Committee,

I write to you today on behalf of the Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance, in support of HB 5529, and the recommended budget for the Oregon Department of Human Services for the 2021-2023 biennium. Specifically, the DVSA Co-located Advocate Program budget, the Temporary Assistance to Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS) budget, and the Survivor Investment Partnership (SIP) budget are of critical importance to our communities.

The Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance is located in the small rural town of Cave Junction and served 620 survivors and their children in 2020. At least 527 of those we worked with also received ODHS benefits (SNAP, TANF, and TADVS). It is critical that victim service programs in rural areas can work with local ODHS offices to ensure that all victims are accessing services that they need to become safe and stable. The mission of the Alliance is to serve survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, elder abuse and trafficking while they meet their immediate and long term goals of safety and self-sufficiency. We can do this so much better when victims have the support from other organizations. We can provide emergency financial services, assistance with protection orders and safety planning, but we also need to know that ODHS is there for when victims need additional assistance.

Approximately a third of DHS self-sufficiency and child welfare cases involve domestic or sexual violence. The risks due to violence have only escalated during this past year of the COVID pandemic. Successful work with DHS clients who are at safety risk due to violence requires a trauma-informed, culturally specific, and survivor-centered approach. In times of crisis like the ones that we experienced last year, and the one we are continuing to experience, a strong response to aid those who are most impacted is critical.

We strongly support the passage of HB 5529 so that survivors have access to culturally-responsive and culturally-specific, survivor-centered, and trauma-informed services to help access immediate and long-term safety from abuse.

Thank you for your time and for your service to the State of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Susie Ellwood- Executive Director, Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance