



Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women



Testimony in Support SB 420

Before the Senate Committee on Human Services

January 23rd, 2023

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit joint testimony in support of SB 420, which will create an Oregon Brain Injury Resource Navigation program to connect survivors of brain injury with the help they need.

The Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, the Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force, Clackamas Women's Services, the Oregon Law Center, and the Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women respectfully join in this letter, on behalf of our community members and clients who are survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault and who have suffered from brain injury as a result of the abuse perpetrated against them.

Intimate partner violence is a serious public health problem that impacts individuals, families and communities across Oregon. Our organizations work to respond to and prevent domestic violence and sexual assault for our clients and communities on a daily basis, and we see the myriad ramifications of this violence on victims, their children and families, and our communities. We stand together in our work to make Oregon a place where all people are free from abuse.

Recent studies have shown that survivors of intimate partner violence suffer from traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) at a significantly higher rate than other high-risk groups like athletes or soldiers.¹ Causes of traumatic brain injury among survivors include being hit on the head, slammed, shaken, or thrown. Causes of anoxic brain injury-related to violence may include loss of oxygen through suffocation, or strangulation. Many individuals may receive no medical care or intervention, thus dramatically increasing the likelihood of recurrent TBI(s), which may result in more severe neurological damage.² Undetected and untreated TBI may mean lifelong behavioral, emotional, and cognitive struggles. These are struggles that could put individuals at greater risk of suffering abuse, can cause homelessness, create trouble obtaining or keeping a job, lead to substance abuse, and more.

The Resource Navigation Program proposed by Senate Bill 420 will help raise awareness of traumatic brain injury and increase best practices across the state. The program will ensure better access to trauma informed and effective services for victims and family members. We will look forward to collaboration regarding implementation of the program to ensure best practices for the specific safety, support, and confidentiality needs of TBI survivors who are also victims of domestic violence or sexual assault.

We urge support of SB 420 and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mind-games/202301/traumatic-brain-injury-from-intimate-partner-violence>

² <https://www.biausa.org/public-affairs/media/domestic-violence-as-a-cause-of-tbi>