



Supporting Survivors • Strengthening Communities • Empowering Change

February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023

House Committee On Judiciary  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

House Committee On Judiciary,

Thank you for taking time to hear our testimonies. My name is Amber Wishoff, I am the Executive Director of My Sisters Place, also known as My Safe Place (MSP) in Lincoln County. I come before you to honor the **voices of survivors** experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking on the Oregon Coast and implore you to support HB2933's \$10 million increase in funding for the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services fund (ODSVS) within the Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division of the Department of Justice.

The ODSVS fund is the **only** General Fund source of dollars for **confidential shelter, support, and safety planning services for survivors and their children**. ODSVS is the fund that provides **stability to keep the doors open** at the confidential emergency shelters, run and staff the 24-hour hotlines, and maintain advocacy services. These dollars go to culturally specific programs, Oregon Tribes, and community-based domestic and sexual violence programs, and serve survivors in **every corner of our state**.

Each situation is uniquely multifaceted. We must take a comprehensive, culturally-responsive, trauma-informed approach in partnering with the survivors to meet their, and often their children's needs on the **path to safety**. This is the work MSP has done for over forty-two years in this community but with the pandemic and the Echo Mountain Fires, the concept of safety has changed drastically.

Our agency, like others across the state, saw an **exponential growth in calls to hotlines and requests for safe, emergency shelter and services**. In the last year we took over 1,300 calls on our "Hopeline," a 24-hour crisis hotline for Lincoln County survivor support. This was a massive increase over what we have seen in years past. Collectively, 90,941 calls for help were answered across the state of Oregon from programs like ours. The ongoing crises of 2020-2022 have made access to resources and stable housing even more difficult for those who are in abusive and oppressive situations. The hotline calls we have received give the most insight into tracking survivor's experience. Through that we are still seeing the impacts in our communities from when we all were asked to stay at home for community health and safety but for some, that was an even more concerning task because **home wasn't a safe place**. The fall out has created more barriers. More trauma. More challenges. Now is the time to act.

Across all communities we are seeing that the needs are great, and the options are few. Especially for underserved and marginalized communities. The **ODSVS funding has been essential** in helping us meet the unique needs as they arise. It has provided emergency assistance to **survivors at imminent risk** of homelessness or unstably or unsafely housed. It makes all the difference, especially in rural communities with limited resources like ours. One of many examples of how this funding has been critical is how it enables us to meet basic needs like offering a safe



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place to sleep at night. In this past year, 160,000 nights in shelter were provided statewide to those seeking support. In Lincoln County, our agency was able to offer 4,140 bed nights to adult survivors and 1,938 to their children.

We need your help to continue that great work through this funding. COVID has cast a long shadow. For people already experiencing hardship, barriers, and oppression, this pandemic has **turned those dark places even darker**. There is no magic wand or catch-all answer to many of the problems facing us. However, when we see needs with plausible solutions, **we CAN make progress**. *Your support would be the spark that helps us illuminate those dark unknowns*. Please support ODSVS funds to **your greatest capacity**, to ensure that **survivors in your communities** have access to emergency shelter, expert safety-planning, housing stability, and wrap-around support services. These services help victims identify and explore real options to escape violence. **These services save lives**.

Thank you very much for your service to the State of Oregon, your consideration, and anything you can do to help **bring light to this situation**.

Sincerely,

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My Sisters' Place  
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