



Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women

POP #309 in SB 5514 Department of Justice Budget

Funding for Children's Advocacy Centers

March 2nd, 2023

Joint Public Safety Subcommittee of the Joint Ways and Means Committee

Co-Chairs Sollman and Evans, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women (the Alliance) we are pleased to submit testimony in support of POP #309 in the Department of Justice Budget.

Founded in 1999, the Alliance is a coalition made up of survivors of gender-based violence, advocates serving survivors, and allies. The Alliance is dedicated to promoting legislation in Oregon that will protect and empower survivors of domestic and sexual violence. The Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, the Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force, and the Oregon Law Center are statewide steering committee members of the Alliance, along with several non-profit confidential community-based survivor service organizations.

Alliance members are united in their commitment to ensuring access to confidential, culturally-specific, community-based, and trauma-informed services for survivors of domestic or sexual violence across the state. The Alliance understands that sexual violence, domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, human trafficking, and other forms of violence and abuse are often connected. These forms of violence are perpetrated through the use of power and control to manipulate, terrorize, and harm victims. As an Alliance, we are committed to our roles in the coordinated community response dedicated to the prevention of violence and supports for survivors.

Children's Advocacy Centers funded by POP #309 are also an important part of the coordinated community response. There are over 24 CACs across the state, serving all 36 counties by providing services like medical exams and forensic interviews—as well as prevention services and follow up family services and mental health treatment for youth who present with concerns of abuse. CACs work in close collaboration with law enforcement, DHS, district attorneys, schools and other community partners during child abuse assessments and investigations, both to be cost-effective and because this model has shown improved outcomes for children.

Advocates working in the field of child abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking have agreed that the rate and severity of abuse of all forms escalated during the pandemic, and the ramifications of these spikes are still manifesting. The economic crisis impacting communities across the state has made it harder for victims and their families to find safety and support on their own. Yet, services providers equipped to provide expert assistance are severely underfunded. The current gap in services for survivors of abuse is unacceptable.



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We must ensure that the state has a stable coordinated community response to meet the needs of survivors of abuse, including community-based and public safety system-based providers. CACs are a critical component of the support network for crime survivors, ensuring specialized services for child victims. Investing \$6 million in Children's Advocacy Centers is necessary to ensure that CACs have the resources needed to intervene and keep kids safe.

For these reasons, we urge your support of POP #309. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.