



February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023

*Re: \$16 Million in the Department of Justice Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division Budget (SB 5514) for:*

- *\$10 Million to the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund (HB 2933) for confidential safety and support services*
- *\$6 Million to the Survivor Housing Fund (HB 3018) for housing assistance for survivors*

Co-Chairs Sollman and Evans, and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety,

On behalf of Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI), we are pleased to submit testimony in support of funding in the Department of Justice Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division Budget (SB 5514) of \$10 million to the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services (ODSVS) Fund for confidential safety planning and support services for survivors and \$6 million to the Survivor Housing Fund (SHF) for housing assistance for survivors. Both amounts were allocated as one-time funding during the pandemic, and we seek continuation of these programs as on-going and stable services designed to meet critical need.

Self Enhancement, Inc. has been providing culturally specific services to Black and African American youth and families in the Portland Metro area for over forty years. The Anti Domestic and Sexual Violence (ADSV) Program at SEI provides confidential, culturally specific, and trauma informed advocacy services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence. SEI operates with a wrap-around services model and seeks to address needs and opportunities for families in all areas of their lives and provides a wide array of programs to support families in achieving their unique goals.

ODSVS and SHF funds are each essential funding sources that allow Oregon's network of nonprofit, community-based, Tribal, and culturally specific domestic and sexual violence service providers across the state to ensure that survivors have access to confidential, culturally specific and trauma-informed support and assistance as they seek safety from abuse.

***\$10 Million to Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund (ODSVS) in the CVSSD Budget (This funding is also requested in a bipartisan stand-alone bill, HB 2933)***

The Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund (ODSVS) distributes funds to more than 60 community-based, culturally specific and Tribal programs across the state of Oregon to provide confidential trauma-informed services for victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, and human trafficking. These community-based nonprofits support children and adult survivors with wide-ranging crisis intervention and long-term supportive services such as emergency shelter, 24/7 crisis line, legal advocacy, emergency and long-term safety-planning, counseling, support groups and children's programs. These programs also provide prevention education in schools as well as training and education throughout the community. Community-based domestic and sexual violence programs intersect with many state systems, including the public health and public safety systems. These programs have built collaborations with law enforcement, healthcare providers, schools, the criminal justice system, social services agencies, and many other community partners, and offer critical support for survivors navigating these structures.

ODSVS funding is a critical source of funding for SEI's community-based culturally specific advocacy programming. ODSVS funding empowers the ADSV program to employ and retain staff with competitive wages, allowing for retention of staff and increased relationship building with participants. ODSVS also allows the ADSV program to put on culturally specific support and trauma education groups for survivors of domestic violence, which have been regularly called for by community members. During the most recent iteration of the group, members expressed profound gratitude for the relationships they fostered in the group, but primarily spoke to how much they valued that the space was culturally specific – a group by and for Black women. ODSVS made possible what was not previously available for Black survivors in the Portland area and allowed participants to openly and safely discuss the unique experiences and intersections of being a Black woman *and* a survivor of sexual and/or domestic violence. This is just one example of the benefits of ODSVS funds towards providing effective culturally specific services. More often than not, government funding is allocated in a very prescriptive way, and outside the box spending is limited and restrictive. The more flexible guidelines of the ODSVS funds allow SEI, and other culturally specific nonprofits, to effectively tailor our service delivery to the community of survivors that we are specifically serving. In this way, the ODSVS funding is increasing equity in Domestic Violence programming across our state by allowing culturally specific providers the freedom to spend dollars on services that are culturally beneficial, and not just on services that are prescribed by our mainstream government systems.

ODSVS funding has also allowed for an increase in client assistance support, which provides direct short term financial assistance for survivors with barriers including debt, licensure fees, clothes for employment, transportation, housing costs, and many other advocacy opportunities. This kind of assistance allows for increased self- and community-sufficiency by increasing housing and employment opportunities for survivors. Assistance with housing is one of the most requested services by participants, and lack of housing resources remains a significant barrier to survivors of sexual and domestic violence who flee. ODSVS funding allows for the ADSV program to support survivors in accessing safe and stable housing that is consistent with the goals and needs of survivors, and primarily serves to fund one-time payment of deposits and move in fees. Most survivors who need housing assistance only need this one-time

assistance and would otherwise experience prolonged periods of homelessness without that support.

ODSVS is the only state general fund source of support for these critical services. The need for these supportive services continues to grow and the burden of essential service provision is challenged by staffing shortages, lack of funding, and other obstacles. We are in support of investing \$10 million for the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund to help programs across the state continue to provide necessary and lifesaving services.

***\$6 Million in Oregon Survivor Housing Fund (SHF) in the CVSSD Budget (This funding is also requested in a bipartisan stand-alone bill, HB 3018)***

The Oregon Survivor Housing Fund (SHF) distributes funds to more than 60 community-based, culturally specific and Tribal programs across the state of Oregon to facilitate access to safe and stable housing for victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, and human trafficking. Survivor Housing Funds are a crucial component of the efforts to assist survivors in their journey towards stable permanent housing. Survivors often face episodes of homelessness due to the violence, safety issues, and/or isolation caused by the abuser. They often have few or no resources available when fleeing.

According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence 2021 Annual Domestic Violence Court Report, Oregon's domestic and sexual violence hotline staff received 475 contacts, averaging nearly 20 contacts per hour in the one-day count. During that time victims made 127 requests for services—including emergency shelter, housing, transportation, childcare, legal representation, and other support needs—that programs could not provide because they lacked the resources. Approximately 80% of these unmet requests were for housing and emergency shelter. Both in 2019 and 2021, the Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women survivor priority survey found that permanent, affordable housing is the greatest need facing survivors of domestic and sexual violence in our state.

Oregon Survivor Housing Funds (SHF) have been instrumental in supporting survivors and their families in finding safe and permanent housing during a statewide housing shortage, rise in rent costs, and current inflation. The SHF supports survivors by providing supportive services and the financial assistance resources necessary to address barriers in accessing housing. This may include moving assistance, application fees, security deposits, and other non-rent move-in costs. These critical and flexible funds help survivors begin this new stage in their lives on solid footing.

Black and African American survivors of domestic and sexual violence face unique housing challenges in Portland, OR due to redlining, discrimination, and systemic disenfranchisement of Black people. SHF funding is a critical resource for survivors who wish to continue living in their communities, but face financial hardship caused by the intersections of domestic violence and systemic racism, among other intersecting experiences of oppression. Within the last few decades, historically Black neighborhoods in Portland have been gentrified, prompting increasing costs of living

and substantial increases in housing costs. SHF funds have allowed the ADSV program to support survivors in accessing housing where they feel safe and supported by their community.

We support an investment of \$6 million in Oregon Survivor Housing Funds to end housing instability for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, stalking and human trafficking.

**In closing, \$16 million in long-term stable funding for ODSVS (\$10 million) and SHF (\$6 million) funding**, administered by DOJ's Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division (CVSSD), will provide programs with the resources to further develop capacity and build a statewide infrastructure designed for sustainability and equity in meeting the needs of survivors. Continuation of this one-time funding is necessary to stabilize programs, meet the rising need for safety services, and offer wages designed to recruit and retain skilled workers and administrators. Additionally, domestic violence prevalence rates across the state of Oregon would indicate that overall funding necessary to meet the scope of need that exists to support survivors in our state is 7-8 times greater than what is currently allocated; and this includes both the SHF and ODSVS funds. This means that DV support currently receives about 15% of the funding that would be required to effectively serve survivors in Oregon. Reducing funding, and especially funding that helps to create greater equity in our statewide service provision, should not be an option in the face of these numbers.

For the above reasons, we hope you will support an ongoing investment of a \$10 million increase in ODSVS funds and a continuation of \$6 million in Survivor Housing Funds in the CVSSD Budget. Full funding of these services is essential to support crime victims and survivors in Oregon and the organizations and providers who serve them. Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Olivia Boucher

Anti Domestic and Sexual Violence Program Manager

Self Enhancement, Inc.