



Peace at Home

ADVOCACY CENTER

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February 27, 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

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

On behalf of Peace at Home Advocacy Center, serving Douglas County, 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. These 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.

Peace at Home is the only agency serving survivors 24/7 in Douglas County, Oregon, from the mountains to the coast line. The agency is dedicated to creating a community free from family violence, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking through support, empowerment and education. ODSVS and Survivor Housing Funds are each essential funding sources that ensure survivors have access to confidential, culturally-responsive and trauma-informed support and assistance as they seek safety from abuse and begin their healing journey. We have many testimonials from people we have served, who believe they would not be alive and thriving today without these services. **"We haven't been heard or helped because people tell us our story sounds like a movie and no-one can help us with the severity of the situation; until we meet the advocates at Peace at Home. They changed my family's life, it was the first time in years that someone could truly help, care for us without judgement and while they are professional, they made us feel like their family."** This woman and her family are finally safe with the help of advocates, assisting with on-going safety planning from being stalked for years as a result of reporting a violent rape and stabbing. Two years later, they have found a place they can call home. This stability has allowed her to go back to school and start working.

\$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.

Douglas County has the unfortunate history of having the highest per-capita rate of domestic violence (DV) incidents and DV homicide in Oregon (according to the U.S. Census, ACS Survey 2010-14; 5 year profiles). The community also experienced an attack of mass violence in 2015 during the Umpqua Community College mass shooting. An analysis of U.S. gun deaths has found that a majority of mass shootings were related to domestic or family violence. Everytown for Gun Safety, an organization that seeks to end gun violence, identified “110 mass shootings took place between January 2009 and July 2014. Of those shootings, at least 57% were related to domestic.” After the mass shooting in 2015 referrals to Peace at Home spiked, specifically survivors accessing legal advocacy services. Since 2019, Peace at Home has expanded community services, including co-locating advocates in Healthcare Clinics and Law Enforcement agencies to respond and provide expertise in safety planning and offering supports. Peace at Home utilizes these funds to provide resources to prevent further abuse and murder in our community. As a result of this funding, almost 200 referrals each quarter are made to advocates, and over 4,000 crisis calls are answered each year. To continue these lifesaving services we need your support. OSDVS 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.

\$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. In Douglas County, we have expanded emergency shelter and transitional housing programs since 2020 to meet the ever growing need for safe housing. We have seen significant success with survivors finding permanent housing through the use of the Oregon Survivor Housing Funds (SHF). 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, the connection of

utilities, and other costs to keep people in their homes and prevent homelessness. These critical and flexible funds help survivors begin this new stage in their lives on solid footing.

Many survivors share that this program is life-changing. One survivor shared, **“I have been an ongoing client with Peace At Home since 2017. During that time I was homeless in which I experienced numerous assaults. I was also struggling with addiction to alcohol. Yet despite all of this, Peace at Home was there for me. There is no doubt in my mind I wouldn't be able to say I am going on 20 months clean and sober and that for once I am safe and there is now hope for a better future. I am enrolled at Umpqua Community College to further my education towards a degree in Human Services. All this is now my reality because Peace at Home staff has empowered me to become a more productive self-sufficient member of society.”** We are thrilled to share that this survivor, like many others is now living in their own apartment.

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.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melanie Taylor Prummer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Melanie Taylor Prummer, M.A.

Executive Director

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