



COMMUNITY WORKS
Domestic Violence · Sexual Abuse · Sex Trafficking
RESOURCE CENTER

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February 22, 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

My name is Barbara Johnson, and I am the Executive Director at Community Works - Jackson County, Oregon's only organization that serves, houses, and supports victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking. For 27 years, we have been providing services through 24/7 crisis intervention, emergency and transitional housing, 24/7 crisis line, and having staff co-located within other systems, including: law enforcement, DHS, the courthouse, and healthcare. Our services ensure there is a Certified Advocate available every hour of every day for victims of violence.

On behalf of Community Works, I am pleased to submit testimony in support of funding in the Department of Justice Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division (SB5514) 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 and ongoing stable services designed to meet critical need.

**\$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)**

Half of Oregon's women and girls have experienced domestic or sexual violence, one of the three highest rates in the nation. **The ODSVS Fund is a lifeline to victims fleeing violence in our community.** In our county alone, they support our emergency Dunn House Shelter – the only shelter for victims and their children fleeing violence to stay, our 24/7 HelpLine crisis line, and our Spanish-speaking advocates who provide critical services and language support to Latinx survivors in our community.

Laura* is a mother of six children who had been married for 20 years to an abusive husband. During this marriage, Laura became isolated from her support system, was expected to not work and yet manage a limited amount of money given to her by her husband to care for her family, and her self-esteem was shattered. Laura became connected to Community Works' Latinx and Hispanic Services Coordinator, Carol, whose position is funded by, and would not be possible without, ODSVS dollars. Laura entered our services slowly at first. She began attending Carol's weekly support and education group where she saw she was not alone, learned how to cope with what was happening to her, and for the first time in two decades began to see a light in the darkness. Over time, with Carol's support in navigating systems, she divorced him. Then, she began to put her life back together the way she wanted it to be. She got her own housing, graduated college with the help of scholarships she applied for, and went to work at a non-profit which gave back to the very community that lifted her up when she needed it. And, Laura's confidence is shining, she has reignited her friendships, and she still attends the support and education group as part of her support network.

ODSVS dollars are critical to providing a safety net for victims of domestic and sexual violence. They allow programs across the state to respond immediately and over time to victims with nowhere else to go. They allow for 24/7 crisis response, emergency housing, and language accessibility needs. **These are the ONLY funds in Oregon that support programs providing confidential, trauma-informed safety and supportive services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.** The services are necessary, life changing, and lifesaving.

**\$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)**

In the spring of 2020, Community Works began spending Survivor Housing funds. Over the next two years, our agency was able to serve 96 victims, and 65 of those victims were provided financial housing assistance to obtain or maintain safe housing away from abuse. Nearly \$65,000 went towards housing, ensuring survivors could have a safe place to live and did not have to choose between being abused and being homeless. Forty-three percent of those supported had children.

These funds also allowed Community Works to hire for the first time a Housing Advocate whose purpose is to meet with survivors, learn their housing needs and barriers, help them overcome those barriers and locate housing, and, most importantly, provide supportive services and advocacy once someone is housed to help them maintain their housing.

Yesenia* and her two young children came to Community Works' emergency Dunn House Shelter last year. She had immigrated from Mexico, and they did not speak English. She sought refuge at our shelter to escape the intimate partner and sexual violence she was experiencing. She had no one else to turn to and nowhere else to go. She had no legal status in the United States and no credit or rental history. She was trying to find housing by working with an organization that supports local Hispanic and Latinx folk, but they were backlogged due to the fires in the Rogue Valley. She did not use any government support or dollars, or even try to apply for citizenship or refugee status, out of fear of being deported.

Yesenia was connected with Community Works' Housing Advocate, Ben. Ben worked with her for nearly three months while she stayed in our shelter. He advocated on her behalf, helped translate information, and worked tirelessly with a local housing group. With Yesenia's drive and Ben's advocacy, Yesenia and her children found housing. We helped with initial move-in costs, and Yesenia is now self-sustaining financially and receiving ongoing supportive services from her advocate, Ben. Without these dollars, this type of advocacy and financial support would not have been possible.

Glenda* was a young person with two children who had come first on the list for an apartment with the local Housing Authority. Unbeknownst to Glenda, her abuser had accumulated an incredible power bill by leaving the bill in her name after she left, never paying it, and letting creditors take it over. Because of this power bill, the apartment went to someone else. After her initial elation at having a safe home for her family, she went to a very bad mental place. Then, she was connected with Ben. He used his advocacy with the creditors and housing financial assistance to support her in paying off this bill completely and worked with the Housing Authority to get her another place. Now, Glenda's family is safely housed. "I feel unstoppable. I haven't felt this way in years. I feel like I'm going to be a better mom." – Glenda

In closing, without these funds, in Jackson County alone, thousands of people, including children, will be homeless, be unsafe with an abuser, and will be living in such despair making it nearly impossible to move forward. These funds are critical. \$16 million in long-term, stable funding for ODSVS (\$10 million) and SHF (\$6 million) funding, will provide our agency with the resources to continue programs, further develop capacity, and meet the needs of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in our community.

We hope you will support this ongoing investment and continuation of funds to support crime victims and survivors in our community and statewide. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Barbara Johnson