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Oregon Faith Movement

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*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 Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's (EMO) Russian Oregon Social Services (ROSS), 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 of 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.

EMO has over 50 years of experience providing culturally responsive legal, resettlement, and food services to immigrants, refugees, and their families in Oregon. ROSS has nearly 30 years of experience administering culturally specific domestic violence and sexual assault (DVSA) and intimate partner violence (IPV) services. ROSS was founded in 1994 as the only program of its kind, catering to the estimated 100,000 Slavic and Russian-speaking refugees and immigrants in the Portland metro region. ROSS continues to be the only agency in Oregon that works specifically with Slavic survivors of DVSA/IPV and their children. Our offerings are vast, including a 24-hour crisis line, restraining order filing, legal services, financial assistance, support groups, and consultations with culturally and language-specific mental health counselors.

ODSVS and Survivor Housing 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.

In the last few years, ROSS has made momentous achievements in the community. In 2021, ROSS served 25 primary survivors and 48 secondary survivors (children). An additional 69 individuals received a customized referral to resources although they did not qualify for our services. In 2022, ROSS served 51 primary survivors and 57 secondary survivors, for a total of 108 individuals and 51 households. Notably, these achievements occurred in addition to a unified response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This global event was felt by our community, clients, and staff. As a culturally specific program, all ROSS staff are members of the community we serve. The ongoing impacts of the war have taken an emotional, physical, and collective strain on our team and community. As a known resource in the community, ROSS has fielded an average of 35 calls every month from Ukrainians and their families looking for resources.

Our clients have historically faced discrimination due to race and ethnicity which has only been exacerbated due to the war in Ukraine, including threats of violence and instances of prejudice and xenophobia. English language proficiency and citizenship status are additional barriers for our clients, as many are immigrants or refugees. Finally, socioeconomic status plays an impact, as emphasized by financial abuse. We estimate that 90-95% of our clients are living on low incomes, based on tracking we do on how many families are receiving state assistance. Each of these experiences is deeply intersectional and informs each other and the experiences of our survivors.

As told from the perspective of one of ROSS' advocate, Client "K"'s story illuminates the intersecting experiences and financial/housing needs of the population we serve: "When Client K first arrived in America at the end of 2019, she had no natural support system here except for her abuser and his family. When she came, she gave up her successful career and gave all her money and life savings to her abuser. What she thought her life would be [like] here in America was not at all what she [experienced]. She thought she was getting a life of love, but instead, she entered a life of violence because as soon as she came to the states, the abuser began to change. He took all her money and without having any support she turned to us... Now, she wants to leave but has too many barriers like not having financial stability, immigration, housing, language, and support". Client K's story illuminates the role of ROSS in supporting survivors at every step in their journey and the urgency for Oregon Survivor Housing Fund increase.

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 in the midst of 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.

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.

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,

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