



Crook County

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March 20, 2023

RE: Support for HB 2391

Chair Kropf and Members of the Committee:

Crook County is writing to ask for your support for HB 2391 which would allocate \$23.5M for County Victim Assistance Programs. Crime victim advocates in DA offices provide a core function of the DAs office, supporting a crime victim through the criminal justice system.

Today, many DA victim advocate positions rely on funding from federal Victims of Crimes Act grants, which have declined annually since 2018. For example, in Crook County approximately two-thirds of our Victim Advocate Program is grant funded. Every year we are worried that further reductions will force painful cuts in the critical services we provide to crime victims every day.

HB 2391 provides funding for one crime victim advocate in DA offices with a single prosecutor and a crime victim advocate for every four deputy DAs in offices with more than one prosecutor. This will allow Crook County to meet our statutory and constitutionally mandated services (including victim notification and input for important stages like pre-trial release, trial preparation and sentencing).

In Crook County this means that victim advocates will be able to continue to provide critical services such as assisting domestic violence victims with the restraining order application process, notifying victims of pre-trial release hearings and court dates, and assisting adult and child victims during trial preparation and sentencing. The victim advocates ensure crime victims have access to the justice system and resources. This is particularly important when considering the lethality risk for victims of domestic violence is higher for victims in rural locations. Our advocates provide essential resources and support to both child and adult victims of crime as they navigate the judicial system. It is essential to have adequate funding for the County Victim Assistance Program.

Thank you for your support,

X

Brian Barney
County Commissioner