



JACKSON COUNTY

Oregon

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Chair Kropf and Members of the Committee

RE: Support for HB 2391

I am writing to ask for your support to pass HB 2391 which would allocate 23.5 M for Crime Victim Assistance Programs.

In Jackson County our Victim Assistance office has 8 FTE employees and our prosecution team when fully staffed has 23 attorneys. Our department goal is to provide victims and witnesses of crimes advocacy, court escort, information and referral to other programs, education about the criminal justice system, and determination of restitution. In fiscal year 2021-2022 in Jackson County the Victims' Assistance program provided services to 4,983 crime victims. This included 912 domestic violence victims, 321 children who were sexually or physically assaulted by adults and 51 family members of homicide victims. The continuity of care and information provided by the advocates is invaluable to a crime victim. The caseloads of our advocates are increasing because the cases can take years to resolve and new cases are continually coming into the office.

In Jackson County, approximately 88% of our victim assistance program is grant funded. If we don't receive a grant, we are forced to make staffing cuts to these critical services. The advocates know that their positions are grant funded, so they face uncertainty each time the grant cycle comes up. We are fortunate to currently have 2 bilingual advocates. With approximately 20% of the population in Jackson County being Spanish speaking, having an advocate who can explain what is happening and answer questions in your own language is so important to those victims.

This funding would provide stability to these critical services. Please support HB 2391.

Sincerely,

Beth Heckert
District Attorney