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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Honorable Rep. Kropf, Chair

FROM: Aaron Knott, MCDA Policy Director

SUBJECT: Testimony in support of HB 4123

DATE: 2/6/24

We submit this testimony in support of HB 4123 and the crucial services provided by Oregon's Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners.

BACKGROUND

Sexual assault nurse examiners are a critical resource in some of our most serious and difficult criminal cases. They serve many functions for the victims of sexual assault far beyond what can be listed here, but this testimony will highlight two of the most critical for the justice and healing of victims in these cases.

First, our SANEs and SAEs are absolutely necessary to gather the forensic evidence prosecutors require to further the prosecution of many serious allegations of sexual assault and misconduct. These professionals exercise a tremendous amount of care to gather the crucial but incredibly sensitive physical evidence which often accompanies an act of sexual assault, and which can be the critical difference in whether a sexual assault victim can successfully prosecute the crime committed against them.

But the far more important function of our SANEs and SAEs is the care and professionalism they bring into every interaction with the survivors of sexual assault. This is often a moment of the deepest trauma for these survivors, and the care they receive from SANEs and SAEs in that moment meets a critical need for support at an unimaginably difficult time.

HB 4123 makes an investment in making sure that all of Oregon has full access to this critical resource. The current staffing levels of SANEs in Oregon is far below demand, particularly in urban areas – a shortfall that not only compromises the pursuit of justice for the survivors of sexual assault but also their ability to find comfort and support in their hour of greatest need. This is a critical and welcome investment, and we urge its passage.

Contact – Aaron Knott, Policy Director