



Oregon Crime Victims Law Center

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RE: Senate Bill 1574

February 7, 2024

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Crime Victims Law Center, I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 1574, which would correct an overreach of 2023's Senate Bill 11. OCVLC fully supports this important technical fix, which is found in Senate Bill 1574, to protect victims' privacy, safety, and right to be heard.

OCVLC is a nonprofit organization that provides free legal representation and advocacy to crime victims throughout Oregon. We represent crime victims at every stage of the criminal justice system, including in post-conviction proceedings like hearings before the Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision. We regularly see the impact crime has on victims, with long-lasting trauma that effects nearly every aspect of a victim's life. Privacy and protection are two of the greatest areas of concern for these victims as they try to recover from the crimes against them.

While SB11 had the admirable goal of increasing government transparency, an unexpected result of the bill is that beginning in 2024, hearings before the Parole Board are required to be published to a public website. Victims have the right to be heard at these hearings, and for those who assert that right, this is their opportunity to address the Board, express their concerns, and describe the effects of the crime on their lives. As an attorney who regularly represents victims at these hearings, I can attest that they are emotional and traumatic proceedings. Many victims we represent ask who will be present at these hearings, whether they will be accessible to the public, and how to protect their privacy. Currently, transcripts of the hearings are available with a public records request. That serves to limit the number of people who may have access to the transcript. Publishing the hearings on a public website allows an unlimited number of people to view the hearing, potentially record them and take screenshots, and listen to a victim describe the most traumatic experience of their lives. I believe that publishing these hearings on a public website will have a chilling effect on victims, limiting those who will assert their right to be heard. Victims have to balance their privacy interests with their interest in asserting their rights in hearings. Unfortunately SB11 tips that balance and further erodes victim privacy.

Oregon's citizens voted to amend the Constitution because they believed victims should have the right to participate in the criminal justice system and the right to be treated with dignity and respect. It's critical that victims feel that they can assert the right to be heard in these important proceedings without being made into a public spectacle. We urge you to support SB 1574. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rosemary W. Brewer

Rosemary W. Brewer
Executive Director