

OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE



SUPPORT HB 2456 **HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY** FEBRUARY 6, 2025

To Chair Kropf, Co-Chairs Chotzen and Wallen, and Members of the House Committee on the Judiciary:

My name is Shannon Rose and I have the honor of serving as the Executive Director of the Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force, a statewide nongovernmental, nonprofit organization that works to create multidisciplinary and survivor-centered solutions for the issue of sexual violence.

I respectfully submit my testimony in support of HB 2456, which modifies provisions relating to the Sexual Assault Victims' Emergency Medical Response Fund, also known as the SAVE Fund. It is not hyperbolic to say that the SAVE Fund is a life altering, and sometimes life saving, resource for survivors of sexual assault across our state. Because of the SAVE Fund, survivors are able to access essential medical care, forensic evidence collection, and mental health support after experiencing the horror of sexual violence.

The modifications proposed in HB 2456 have been thoughtfully considered to provide the Department of Justice, as the administrator of the fund, the absolutely crucial flexibility and adaptability needed to keep up with what we know about the aftereffect of experiencing a sexual assault and the subsequent needs of survivors. This includes both economic aftereffects, as well as physical and mental aftereffects.

In 2017, a study published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, estimated the annual lifetime cost of rape to be \$122,461 per each victim. This includes costs incurred to access medical care, legal support, counseling, lost time off of work, and more. No survivor should ever have to pay for the cost of their own victimization. And, all survivors,

regardless of their financial resources, should have access to the care they need. The SAVE Fund is a key mitigating factor in the financial impacts of experiencing sexual violence.

The SAVE Fund modifications also reflect what we know about the impacts of trauma on a person's brain and body. During the initial days, and even weeks, after experiencing an assault, it is common for survivors to experience acute symptoms of trauma. This could include disorganized or foggy thinking, memory lapses, anxiety, depression, numbness, intrusive memories and thoughts, and physical exhaustion and pain, just to name a few. Some survivors know immediately that they want and need to seek medical forensic care, while others may need some space and time to process their experience and make the decision that is best for them. I should also note that some survivors may not actually be in a safe position to immediate care, if the person who harmed them is still present or holding some means of control over their comings and goings. By broadening the time frames allowed to seek care that is still covered by the SAVE Fund, we are best supporting survivors through that acute experience of trauma and not contributing to it by forcing a quick decision.

As a field, and as a community, our knowledge of the impacts of sexual assault, and the impacts on and needs of survivors, has grown greatly over the years since the SAVE Fund was initially authorized. By supporting these modifications and voting in favor of HB 2456 we can let survivors know that we are willing to learn, to listen, and to adapt to best support their healing.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shannon Rose".

Shannon Rose
Executive Director
Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force