

Submitter: Libra Forde  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3196

Thursday, February 5, 2025

Re: Support for Victims of Crime Act grants (HB 3196)

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallan, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

On behalf of Women's Foundation of Oregon, we are submitting testimony in support of HB 3196, which appropriates money to the Department of Justice to backfill reductions in federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants.

#### Background

In 1984, Congress signed VOCA into law and created the Crime Victims Fund (CVF). VOCA funding (appropriated from the CVF) is the primary source of federal grants for victim services, including services for survivors of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking, elder abuse, and other crimes. It supports victims in some of the most high-risk scenarios who are experiencing strangulation, stalking, and an increased risk of serious injury and homicide. It also matches 75% of eligible state victim compensation funding.

#### Impact

Programs across the state rely on VOCA funding to provide services, including Children's Advocacy Centers, District Attorney Victim Assistance Programs (DAVAPs), Community-based Nonprofit Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (DVSA) Programs, and Campus Sexual Assault Programs. These grants fund vital services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence, ranging from crisis intervention to long-term healing.

Clackamas Women's Services (CWS) utilizes Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding to support critical services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, particularly through programs that provide safety, healing, and long-term stability. This funding enables organizations like Clackamas Women's Services (CWS) to operate essential programs, including emergency shelter, crisis response, legal advocacy, and trauma-informed support for children and families impacted by violence.

One of the most vital programs at the Family Justice Center (FJC), made possible by VOCA funding. Without this funding, we face the heartbreaking reality of shutting down this program or even ceasing operations at the FJC altogether.

As a past Board Member and Domestic Violence Survivor, I've witnessed firsthand the impact of these services. I think of the time when a mother and her three young children who arrived at the CWS seeking refuge after fleeing an abusive home. That mother was me. Thanks to VOCA-funded resources, I received immediate legal support, and wraparound services that allowed us to rebuild our lives safely. Today,

we are thriving—but without continued funding, future families in crisis may not have access to the same life-saving support.

Cutting VOCA funding isn't just a budgetary decision—it's a direct threat to survivors and their ability to heal and rebuild. We must protect these essential programs to ensure that every survivor, especially our most vulnerable children, has a path to safety and justice. Bipartisan efforts are underway federally to create a long-term solution for the CVF, and your support in creating a bridge for organizations like ours to stabilize funding and our ability to offer life-saving services to survivors is essential. We know that supporting victims of crime is a nonpartisan issue, and these efforts will continue. There is a separate bill in the Oregon Senate to support a federal fix—SJM 2 Urging Congress to fund VOCA.

For the above reasons, we urge you to support this request for bridge funding of VOCA grants by passing HB 3196. Crime victims and survivors in Oregon deserve the safety and well-being that these funds afford. Organizations like ours that provide these services cannot continue delivering them without your support. Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Libra Forde

Past CWS Board Member