



Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee,

My name is Max Williams. For those members of the committee I haven't met, I am a former state legislator, Corrections Director and CEO of the Oregon Community Foundation. **Today I am here on behalf of the Oregon Coalition for Nonprofit Safety in support for Senate Bill 939.**

What is unique about the Oregon Coalition for Nonprofit Safety is that its members organizations are incredibly diverse in purpose, belief, mission and focus. These organizations cross religious and cultural differences, mission focus, and the populations that they serve. But the one thing they hold in common is a fundamental commitment that EVERYONE in Oregon should be able to gather, worship, celebrate, exercise their fundamental rights and receive support and services in SAFETY – free from threats, violence, and intimidation.

Yet in today's environment, these same organizations are increasingly targeted by hate-fueled threats and acts of violence. As we've seen across the country, faith-based institutions, cultural centers, advocacy organizations, and social service providers have become the focus of such attacks simply because of who they are and what they stand for. We know that threats, violence, intimidation, and vandalism are on the rise – both nationally and in Oregon. **According to the most recent FBI data, hate crimes have increased by 66% nationwide in the past five years – and that data shows an even more pronounced increase of 106% in Oregon.**

A June 2024 report by the Oregon Attorney General's Civil Rights Office states that reports **to the Oregon Hotline regarding anti-religion bias saw the largest increase – up 128% –including a 263% increase in anti-Muslim targeting and a 144% increase in anti-Jewish targeting. LGBTQ+ reports targeting gender identity increased 56% in a single year.**

It is a sad truth that extreme political discourse and hate speech are increasingly prevalent on social media. And unfortunately, recent history is replete with cases where the proliferation of violent speech was a precursor to major acts of physical violence.



In the mid-2000s Congress created a federally funded nonprofit security grant program to provide additional resources to nonprofits that were at greater risk of violence and intimidation. That program is operated by FEMA nationally and administered locally by the Department of Emergency Management. Since its adoption, **17 other states have created state-funded nonprofit security grant programs to augment the federal resources.**

SB 939 would establish a Nonprofit Security Grant Program in Oregon to provide much-needed resources to nonprofits that are at heightened risk of due to their ideology, association, mission, or the populations they serve. **We are seeking a budget allocation of \$5M to fund the program** and to begin providing security grants to Oregon nonprofits in 2025, with a maximum grant award of \$150,000. We consider SB 939 a modest request considering the need in our community. In the last two cycles (FY 23 and 24) of the federal grant program, we know that more \$13 million dollars of Oregon grant requests went unmet because of the limitation of federal funding.

During the covid crisis I was the CEO of the Oregon Community Foundation, and I partnered with Oregon's nonprofit community – and with the Legislature to respond to exceptional needs of Oregonians. I can speak with experience when I say that nonprofits are the backbone of our communities. They provide essential services, advocate for their communities, provide places to worship and networks of volunteers. They create safe spaces for some of our most vulnerable populations and for some communities they are the primary way that we reach Oregonians who need services or support.

SB 939 acknowledges this reality and takes a proactive stance to safeguard these at-risk nonprofits. By creating a state-level Nonprofit Security Grant Program, Oregon would join other states in ensuring that high-risk organizations have access to critical funding for security enhancements — including facility upgrades, security personnel, emergency preparedness training, and more.

For most nonprofits, the increasing financial burden of implementing security measures is simply out of reach – impacting the population they serve, their



staff and their risk management and access to insurance. This funding would assist them to take meaningful steps to protect their staff, volunteers, and the people they serve, without compromising their essential work.

Creating this program sends a clear message: Oregon stands with its community organizations and recognizes that safety and security are foundational to their ability to fulfill their missions. Along with potentially preventing tragedy, this bill is about fostering an environment where everyone in Oregon can exercise their protected freedom to assemble, worship, celebrate, and receive support according to the dictates of their conscience – and do so in safety.

I urge this committee to pass SB 939 and to make Oregon safer for everyone.

Sincerely,

Max Williams,

Oregon Coalition for Nonprofit Safety