



2594 E. Barnett Road Suite C Medford, OR 97504

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 939

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Barbara Johnson, and I am the Executive Director of Community Works. We are members of Oregon Coalition for Nonprofit Safety.

I am writing on behalf of Community Works, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence, to express our strong support for State Senate Bill 939, which would allocate critical funding for nonprofit organizations to enhance security measures. This funding is essential to ensuring that survivors, particularly those who are BIPOC and LGBTQI+, can access life-saving services without fear of further harm.

SB 939 helps Oregon nonprofits that are at greater risk of violence, threats and intimidation because of who we are, who we represent or who we serve. Over the last decade there have been increasing threats and violence and intimidation directed to nonprofits like ours across the country. The need for increased security at domestic violence agencies is not theoretical, but rather a reality we face every day. Survivors of domestic violence often flee abusers who continue to pose a serious and imminent threat. Abusers frequently escalate their behavior when they believe their control is challenged by stalking survivors and staff at our agency, system locations such as Dept. of Human Services, Courthouse, or any public place. BIPOC survivors often experience racialized threats and violence that compound their trauma and make it even harder for them to seek help. We often combat community comments stating services should not be accessed by individuals that “came here illegally.” What we know is their abuser with the promise of legal routes to citizenship brought the majority of our survivors who are immigrants here. However, when they arrive, they are isolated, denied access to language learning and services to support citizenship. Their abusers then use the threat of deportation and ICE to continue their power and control over them. Immigrant survivors hear abusers say they will report that they came here illegally on their own and once deported, they will not be able to re-enter this country legally. This threat is even more harmful when there are children involved. We also hear from Hispanic survivors that their abusers often confiscate any documentation they have such as a resident card or passport. Abusers also use the threat of ICE “lurking in our community looking for illegals” to deter survivors from going anywhere from getting groceries to seeking services.

For BIPOC and LGBTQI+ survivors, they experience additional dangers from community members who oppose their very existence. There has been increase in hate-driven violence, with extremist groups and individuals targeting domestic violence organizations that serve LGBTQI+ survivors. Staff and clients have been harassed both in person and online. This agency has received threats from people who believe that LGBTQI+ individuals do not deserve protection or that domestic violence services are only for women. At our local Pride event in 2024, staff had protesters following them and harassing threats saying, “burn in the fires of eternal damnation” for attending along with threats to call child welfare services and report them for “perversion against children.” Now, other organizations in Jackson County have been called domestic terrorists for recognizing Martin Luther King Jr Day celebrations.

Often these terrible actions take the form of words, shouts, graffiti or trolling emails sent to us or our staff. But we live with the constant and daily realization that at any moment they could erupt in real violence. Our staff live with that risk, and so do our community base BIPOC organizations BASE, UNETE, and faith base organizations. These events have real impact. They disrupt our ability to meet our mission. They make our community afraid to gather. They chip away at our basic and fundamental rights. It shouldn't be like this.

Addressing and assessing our security needs is an ongoing process, and because of our increased risk, it requires that we make additional investment and resources, taking away vital support for our organization's primary mission. Despite these risks, Community Works lacks the financial resources to implement comprehensive security measures for our staff and clients. We operate on tight budget, prioritizing direct services over security enhancements. This means that security cameras, emergency alert systems, and protective infrastructure are often unavailable, leaving both survivors and staff vulnerable. Community Works relies on donations from community members to help with some of these expenses, however it does not begin to address the high costs for comprehensive security.

As community-led nonprofits we are often on the frontline in serving our community. We provide an incredibly important service – as a place to provide “*HOPE, SUPPORT, and EMPOWERMENT to those impacted by violence.*”. What we do is important to the broader community wellbeing. We are here today in partnership with organizations with widely different missions, cultures and beliefs, because regardless of who we serve, what we believe, how we worship or represent our culture – we are committed to the principle that EVERYONE in Oregon should be entitled to exercise their rights free from violence and intimidation and deserve to do so SAFELY.

Current resources are insufficient to meet the needs of Oregon's nonprofit community. The risk is real, and we need your help addressing it. That is why we are asking you to join other states that have created a state-funded nonprofit security grant program and support SB 939.

We urge you to pass this bill and prioritize the safety of all survivors, regardless of their race, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Protecting nonprofit organizations is not just about securing buildings—it is about securing futures.

Thank you for your attention to this legislation and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,



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*Community Works is here to bring
HOPE, SUPPORT, and EMPOWERMENT
to those impacted by violence.*

A 501(c)(3), non-profit, charitable corporation. Donations are tax-exempt to the extent permitted by the IRS code. No goods are provided in exchange for your contribution. Therefore, this gift may qualify for a tax deduction as allowable by law. Our Tax ID number is 93-0633804.

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