

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

My name is Gwenn Wysling, Executive Director of Bethlehem Inn. We are members of Oregon Coalition for Nonprofit Safety, and we are offering this testimony in support of SB 939.

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 increase in what nonprofits that work with vulnerable populations deal with on top of the challenging missions that we strive to provide need an assurance of safety and security for not only our clients, but the staff and volunteers that do this important work.

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 clients, volunteers and community partners. 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. We work hard to meet our obligations within a limited budget and continually challenged with hiring and retaining qualified staff.

As community-led nonprofits we are often on the frontline in serving our community. We provide an incredibly important service – as a place that *Transforms Lives Together through Shelter, Help and Hope*. 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.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gwenn Wysling".

Gwenn Wysling  
Executive Director  
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