



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

My name is **Sahaan McKelvey**, I am the **Director of Advocacy & Engagement at Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI)**. 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. In recent years, SEI has experienced numerous incidents of threats and intimidation. And the heightened political landscape that we currently find ourselves in, where polarization is profound and tensions run high on all sides, lends itself to increasing instances as we move forward. In 2020, when numerous protests were taking place in Portland, Oregon, SEI received hundreds of threatening phone calls, including death threats and threats of mass violence. We felt compelled to install bullet proof glass in our previously open lobby, and endeavor that came with a price tag of over 350 thousand dollars. In recent months, SEI has had KKK recruitment flyers left on every car in our parking lot. We realize that we are the largest African American Non-Profit in the state of Oregon, and this reality paints a target on SEI for anyone who wants to create harm for the African American community as a whole.

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 thousands of children and families that SEI serves. On any given day, hundreds of people will interact with SEI in our building spaces, many of these children who are participating in After School Programming. 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. Over the past 5 years, SEI has invested over 500 thousand dollars in security upgrades at our buildings, and we still have great need in this area. Currently, we do not have the ability to remotely lock down our external doors in our buildings. If someone wanted to get in to cause harm to our community, they would be inside the building before we could get the doors locked! And while the safety of our staff and community members is our greatest priority, we also live with the reality that every dollar that we have to spend on security is a dollar that we are not able to spend on our core mission of serving children and families. Investments like those created by SB 939 will not only be live saving, but



they will be life enhancing as we are then able to put these dollars towards serving our community.

As community-led nonprofits we are often on the frontline in serving our community. We provide an incredibly important service – as a place designed to uplift kids and families by creating options, relationships, supports, exposure, and enhancements that allow children and families to thrive on their own terms, SEI builds community on a daily basis. 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.

Sahaan McKelvey

Director of Advocacy & Engagement

Self Enhancement, Inc.

[sahaanm@selfenhancement.org](mailto:sahaanm@selfenhancement.org)