



PO Box 441, Hood River, OR 97031
Phone 541.386.4808
24/7 Crisis line 541.386.6603
www.helpinghandsoregon.org

Co-Chairs, Vice-Chairs, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Stephanie Irving and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Helping Hands Against Violence in Hood River, Oregon to urge support of funding for the specialized programs that support survivors of domestic and sexual violence and their children in the Department of Justice Budget's POP 327 and in HB 3196.

As the director of our small rural non-profit in Hood River, Oregon these funds are critical to us supporting survivors as they flee abusive situations and make positive changes in their lives for not only themselves, but their children. ODSVS funds help to pay a portion of our advocates salaries who help multiple people (women and men) every day navigate their way to safety. The Survivor Housing Funds (SHF) go directly to helping the survivor with housing needs.

Here is a report from one of our advocates on the story of a recent client (name and identifiers have been changed) that reflect the importance of both the ODSVS and the SHF funds:

“Chloey came into shelter fleeing an abusive husband from Arkansas. She had several barriers going into independent living including fear, pain from past assaults, and an abundance of PTSD that inhabited Chloey from even wanting to leave the shelter.

“In our first week of working with new clients and getting to know them, we often sit down and start carving out a plan for what we call " forward progress" though it may be different for some we usually start by addressing housing and self-sufficiency and counseling. Lucky for us we were able to utilize our in-house support group to help work on some of the PTSD and therapeutic needs and then followed up with finding a job and working on low-income housing applications. We worked very closely with Chloey and individually looked through the job wanted ads and helped her apply to several local businesses. Though this took some time and a lot of effort Chloey was able to find a job that felt good and safe and didn't further trigger any more stress than what she already had on her plate. This job became a blessing in disguise because she found friendship and support within her coworkers that transformed her independence and outlook on the future.

“During this time we continued on her forward progress by blanketing every low-income apartment with applications for affordable housing and continued to support her on her road to independence. As time went by we received notice that she will be coming up on a low-income housing list and what followed after that is a community member that was moving and had a furniture that she wasn't needing. Everything was just lining up! Helping Hands was able to support Chloey in her move by using some housing funds to help her with deposits and we stocked her apartment with



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donations from our community members. The road to "forward progress" is different for everyone but it goes to prove that when you have the right support that that road isn't as treacherous as it may seem."

The Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division of the Department of Justice provides critical safety net services and programs that can quite literally save the lives of survivors and their children fleeing violence and seeking safety and security.

The two packages outlined below are of critical importance to the lives of survivors and their children:

Department of Justice Budget POP 327: ONGOING FUNDING TO STABILIZE CRITICAL SURVIVOR SERVICES PROGRAMS (\$22M)

Please ensure the inclusion of \$22 million in grant funding in the Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division (CVSSD) of the Department of Justice for Tribal, culturally specific, and community-based programs to continue providing confidential services to victims of domestic and sexual violence, stalking, and human trafficking across the state. Without this investment into ongoing funding, programs will be forced to lay off staff and will have reduced capacity to provide critical life-saving safety and advocacy services for survivors and their children.

\$10 Million for ODSVS: These funds provide support for the network of confidential, trauma-informed, community-based and culturally-specific programs providing shelter, safety planning, hotline, and advocacy services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence (DSV) and their children across the state.

\$6 Million for the Survivor Housing Fund: Survivor Housing Funds allow DVSA service providers to empower survivors in the next step of accessing safety from violence. These funds increase the chances at long-term stability and safety for survivors and their children. As Oregon's housing affordability crisis continues to reach new peaks, the Survivor Housing Funds are necessary to make it possible for victims to escape the cycle of abuse, and to establish stability for themselves and their children.

\$6 Million for Children's Advocacy Centers: CACs are the state's mandated and unique resource for the assessment, treatment, and prevention of child abuse and neglect and the associated trauma, in order to promote health and hope in children, youth, families, and communities.

Providing hope, safety and support to survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking.



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These investments are necessary to continue current levels of survivor services that were finally brought up to baseline minimal access levels in 2019 thru one-time investments. In 2024, the Legislature recognized the importance of this increased capacity and unanimously passed HB 4140, which stated that these funds are to be considered current service level moving forward. If these investments are not continued, survivor services in communities across the state will suffer significant cuts. POP #327 cements the continuation of these funds.

HB 3196: One-Time Funding to Prevent Cuts to Interdisciplinary Victim Services Programs (\$18.5 Million)

The Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) is the primary source of federal grants for victim services, including services for survivors of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, stalking, trafficking, attempted homicide, and other crimes. Oregon was notified of the 42% in federal funding cuts following the close of the 2024 short Session. We need a one-time investment to continue important partnerships between service providers, prosecutors, law enforcement, and others serving victims of crime in every county in the state.

While much of our funding does stem from our community, without support of the ODSVS and SHF funds, it would be very difficult to continue to support all the survivors and their families as we do. The example of “Chloey” above is just one client—out of hundreds a year who we serve. All needs are different, everyone’s journey is their own. Helping Hands Against Violence is here to support survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in any way that is needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephanie Irving", written over a white background.

Stephanie Irving
Executive Director
Helping Hands Against Violence