

Submitter: Esther Garrett

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5014

Written Testimony Survivor Services POP 327 and HB 3196

Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, Co-Vice Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith,
and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Esther Nelson-Garrett, and I am writing to you with urgency in support of life-saving services for survivors of sex trafficking, as well as domestic and sexual violence. These services—funded through Policy Option Package 327 and HB 3196 in the Department of Justice Budget—are not optional; they are essential to survival. I speak to you today from two deeply personal perspectives: as the Founder and CEO of Safety Compass, an Oregon-based nonprofit serving human trafficking survivors—and as a survivor myself. Every year, we walk alongside hundreds of survivors whose stories are marked by trauma, danger, and resilience. And based on the patterns of abuse we encounter daily, I can tell you unequivocally: nearly every survivor we serve also qualifies as a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and—when underage—child abuse.

The national data is staggering and heartbreaking: individuals trafficked for sex are more than 100 times more likely to die than the average American. Behind every missing person's report or homicide headline is often a hidden, unrecognized history of commercial sexual abuse, or domestic violence. We are not just offering services—we are fighting for the lives of Oregon's most vulnerable youth and families. Without the passage of these measures, more lives will be lost. That is not speculation. It is certainty.

Policy Option Package 327 continues a critical \$22 million investment in Tribal and community-based programs that offer confidential shelter and immediate safety services to those fleeing violence and exploitation. These funds are not an increase—they are a preservation of baseline support, first achieved in 2019 and affirmed by the Legislature in 2024 through the unanimous passage of HB 4140. Failure to maintain these funds would result in devastating cuts to survivor services across Oregon.

HB 3196 provides a one-time \$18.5 million investment to sustain coordinated, interdisciplinary victim services. These funds support vital partnerships between advocates, prosecutors, law enforcement, and others—ensuring that survivors in every county receive the help they desperately need.

These programs don't just support survivors—they save their lives. They give children a chance to grow up in safety. They help survivors reclaim their futures. Please, do not let these essential services slip away. Our communities are counting

on your leadership and your action.

Thank you for your dedication to Oregon's most vulnerable. Your decisions in this moment will echo in the lives you choose to protect.

With urgency and hope,

Esther Nelson-Garrett

Founder & CEO, Safety Compass