

Submitter: Renae Bracken

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5014

Chair Broadman, members of the committee, my name is Renae Bracken. I am a resident of Albany, OR and am here in support of HB 5014. In addition to being an Albany resident, I am also a single mother, a Cherokee citizen, a veteran, a survivor of domestic violence, a survivor of sexual assault, and a survivor of childhood sexual assault. Aside from those personal notes about myself, I am a paralegal in DOJ and a member leader with SEIU 503.

Under normal circumstances, I would never tell anyone so much information about myself. However, these are not normal circumstances. The services provided by the Oregon Department of Justice are valuable to me for a number of reasons and, now, more than ever, the funding of the Oregon Department of Justice is critical.

HB 5014 reflects AG Rayfield's continued mission for the Department of Justice to support Oregonians with impactful services that are vital to the overall wellbeing of all Oregonians, such as child support, crime victim's services and child advocacy. As a mother who receives child support and has had the assistance of Oregon's DCS for the past 8 years, I can attest to the agency's need for these funds. It is because of state funded Child Support Services that I am not the homeless mother I was 11 years ago. HB 5014 would allow DCS to modernize programs which would expand access to child support services and rescue families like my own and give hope to these families. Additionally, I am a paralegal at DOJ and a member leader with SEIU 503. I have seen and heard from colleagues about the need for more support staff and training necessary to manage the increasing caseloads currently overworking staff at all levels. Every dollar spent in support of child support efforts is a dollar spent to enrich the life of a child.

While I have a vested interest in advocating for DCS, I am also strongly supportive of the many other programs that the Department engages in that support our communities. I didn't have access to crime victim's services for the crimes committed against myself. I did manage to survive my struggles, but I cannot help but wonder how my life would have been changed if I had been able to access services like those offered by CVSSD. I have heard the testimonials of folks that have been helped and supported by these services, and I have seen the impact on the many children and families on my caseload. These services truly make a difference in the lives of those who are provided with services. The help, support, and even funding provided may change the life of a person and if even one life is changed for the better, then the program is successful. But we are not talking about just one life changed with CVVSD. We are talking about thousands of people, men, women, children, vulnerable populations or people, who have been assisted and had their lives changed. Being able to escape abuse, being able to overcome the trauma,

being able to get off the streets are things many people never have to be proud of, but for every person helped by CVVSD, that is what the agency has given them. You have seen presentations, and you have heard testimony from so many. I could exercise redundancy and tell you story after story to support each requested dollar of funding. The work done by the Department of Justice's many departments is mission critical to ensure a better Oregon. The work completed by the agency protects the people of Oregon and protects the State's interests. The agency is asking for funding for additional positions and programs across its many departments to be able to keep up with and maintain the efforts that have already been taken to ensure Oregon is successful and that the people of Oregon are safe and supported. Please ensure that the Department of Justice is not just minimally funded but rather ensure that the Department is adequately funded to meet the needs to operate each Department, Division and Program for a stronger, safer and more successful Oregon.