

Submitter: Katie Rodrigues

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5525

Domestic Violence Written Testimony

May 1, 2025

Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz and members of the Committee, my name is Katie Rodrigues, and I am currently a Law Student at the University of Oregon and am in the Domestic Violence Clinic. I participated in the Clinic to gain real-world experience representing clients and to prepare for my future career as a prosecutor specializing in domestic violence and sex crimes.

I am here today to urge you to continue supporting this vital State Program. The Clinic plays a unique and irreplaceable role in both Oregon's legal education system and its commitment to survivor safety.

I chose the Domestic Violence Clinic over other clinics, like the Prosecution Clinic, because the Domestic Violence Clinic provides students with more court experience than other clinics and prioritizes victim-centered lawyering through its client-counselling opportunities. This is to say, the Domestic Violence Clinic provides law students with a practical education in a way no that other law school experience can. We are in court every week, either trying cases for our clients, or observing court procedure and legal arguments. When we are not in court, we are regularly meeting with clients, helping them understand their legal options and preparing them for court. We are supervised by incredible lawyers, who take time to guide and encourage us on top of their already busy schedules.

This past year, I represented a client who was strangled and sexually assaulted in her garage during a parenting exchange. Mere days later, her ex-husband threatened to take the children away, ensuring that she would never see them again. Being asked to advocate on her behalf, as a court certified law student, was an incredible responsibility and honor. I was motivated by the strength she exemplified in coming to the Clinic for help. Her courage motivated me to prepare the best case I could, which ultimately resulted in the Judge ruling in my client's favor. Over the course of that experience, I found my own strength and courage as a legal practitioner. That case was the first win of what I hope will be a long career in the courtroom, defending victims of domestic violence.

But imagine what would have happened, had the Domestic Violence Clinic not existed. Imagine the justice that would have escaped my client, and the education I—or my fellow classmates who handle similar cases—would have missed out on. On the aggregate, imagine the caliber of future lawyers this State would miss out on, without well-funded experiential programs like the Domestic Violence Clinic. I hope you can see why so many of us are passionate about this issue.

The impact this clinic has had on my legal training has been invaluable. Thank you

for your support. I am excited to continue my involvement in the Domestic Violence Clinic next year, and respectfully request your continued financial investment in this Clinic and my education. I additionally ask for your continued support of the Clinic on behalf of my past clients, future clients, and the communities we serve.