



5 May 2025

The Honorable Jason Kropf
Chair, Judiciary
Oregon House of Representatives
Room H-491, State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301

The Honorable Kim Wallen
Vice Chair, Judiciary
Oregon House of Representatives
Room H-388, State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Kropf and Vice Chair Kim Wallen,

We write to offer our support for SB 180, which would classify communication from a survivor speaking about an incident of sexual assault, harassment, or discrimination, without malice, as privileged communication protected from defamation action. Furthermore, this bill would ensure financial security for the survivor in the event that it is discovered that the defamation claim is a retaliatory action from the abuser. This bill is critical to ensuring that survivors in Oregon are empowered and protected when they speak against their assailant.

RAINN is the nation's largest anti-sexual assault organization. Founded in 1994, RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800.656.HOPE and hotline.rainn.org). RAINN also carries out programs to support victims, educate the public, and improve public policy.

Retaliatory defamation lawsuits are an insidious tactic used to silence survivors of sexual violence, instilling fear and discouraging them from speaking out. The mere threat of legal action can be overwhelmingly stressful, particularly for those who have already endured the trauma of abuse. For survivors, the possibility of facing a defamation suit each time they share their story creates a barrier that inflicts emotional and financial harm, which further delays their healing and recovery. This threat extends beyond the individual survivor, impacting the broader survivor community by deterring both reporting of incidents and public testimony. The chilling effect of potential legal retaliation fosters an environment where abusers feel



emboldened, and survivors feel coerced into silence. SB 180 would not only empower survivors to reclaim their voices and advocate for justice without fear of retribution, but also deter perpetrators from using defamation lawsuits as a means of silencing survivors. By enacting this legislation, you would ensure that survivors would have the opportunity to heal, speak out, and seek justice without fear of retaliation.

We commend the courage and dedication of survivor Victoria Burke in leading the nation-wide effort to ensure that survivors can share their story without fear of legal retaliation. We also thank the House Judiciary Committee for their leadership in championing the rights of survivors across Oregon.

We urge you to move this bill forward and stand with survivors of sexual violence in Oregon. Thank you for your consideration and continued leadership.

Sincerely,

Scott Berkowitz
President, RAINN