

## Written Testimony in Support of HB 3582

Presented by Mollie Montague, Director of State Legislative Affairs

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Honorable Chair Jama and members of the committee, I write to offer our testimony in support of HB 3582 (Representative Hartman). This legislation would show survivors in Oregon that justice is available for them when they are ready to come forward and disincentivize those seeking to cover up the crime until the statute of limitations has passed. We urge the committee to advance this legislation.

As you may be aware, 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](https://hotline.rainn.org)). RAINN also carries out programs to support victims, educate the public, and improve public policy.

Every 68 seconds, an American is sexually assaulted, and every nine minutes, authorities find evidence that a child in America has been the victim of sexual abuse. More than two-thirds of these crimes are never reported to police and only 25 out of every 1,000 rapists will end up in prison.<sup>1</sup> In one study of child sexual abuse survivors, over half first disclosed at age 50 or older<sup>2</sup>. In Oregon, arbitrary and archaic statutes of limitations restrict victims' access to justice. Victims often are afraid to come forward because they fear they will not be believed, because their assailant has threatened them, or because their perpetrator holds power in the community. By failing to extend the statutes of limitation past the point of disclosure, the law specifically benefits repeat abusers and those who exert continued control over their victims.

Eliminating these barriers allows Oregon to identify hidden predators and the institutions that endanger the public by protecting them. Holding offenders

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<sup>1</sup> <https://rainn.org/about-sexual-assault>

<sup>2</sup> Delayed Disclosure Child USA 2024 Factsheet, A Comprehensive Report on Delayed Disclosure in Cases of Child Sexual Abuse, Insights, Implications, and Pathways Forward, <https://childusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Delayed-Disclosure-2024.pdf>



accountable shifts the cost of the harm from the victim and taxpayer to those who cause abuse. More than 22 U.S. States, Territories, and the federal government have completely eliminated the civil statutes of limitations for at least some of their most serious sex offenses.<sup>3</sup> The remaining states need to reform their civil statutes of limitations to allow all victims of sexual abuse to access justice and shift the economic burden of their abuse to the perpetrators or enablers of the abuse, whenever the evidence is available and sufficient to prove the abuse. You can show survivors that rapists do not get away with their crimes in your state by eliminating the statute of limitations for civil claims of sexual assault and child sexual abuse.

We are responsible for creating a system in which more victims choose to report because they trust the system to do something about it. This will serve Oregon's overall public safety interests and support efforts to hold perpetrators of sexual assault, who are often serial criminals, accountable. HB 3582 provides necessary support and flexibility for victims of violent crimes and strengthens Oregon's justice system's ability to hold offenders accountable. You can ensure that the legal system reflects the values of justice and support, especially for the most vulnerable.<sup>4</sup>

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.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://childusa.org/2024sol/>

<sup>4</sup> You can learn more about eliminating civil statutes of limitations for survivors in our memo on the topic [here](#). For further questions please reach out to Mollie at [policy@rainn.org](mailto:policy@rainn.org)

