



TO: Rep. Jason Kropf, Chair
Rep. Kim Wallan, Vice Chair
Rep. Willy Chotzen, Vice Chair
Members of House Judiciary Committee

FR: Oregon District Attorneys Association

RE: HB 4157 – Support

February 9, 2026

On behalf of the Oregon District Attorney's Association, we respectfully submit this letter in support of Oregon House Bill 4157 (HB 4157), relating to the admissibility of out-of-court statements involving certain sex crimes in criminal proceedings. Oregon has long recognized that some crimes involve dynamics that lead a victim to be unable to testify due to fear, coercion, or the effects of trauma. Accordingly, Oregon evidence rules already allow for admissibility of certain types of hearsay statements, for example, those made by a child or elderly person concerning an act of abuse or by a victim describing an act of domestic violence.

HB 4157 would amend Oregon's hearsay rules to allow certain out-of-court statements about sex crimes to be admitted into evidence even when the declarant is available to testify, provided the court makes certain findings. Law enforcement officers frequently encounter situations where victims of these crimes are understandably reluctant or unable to testify at trial, even though they provided a clear and credible account of the offense to officers at the time it occurred. The realities of participating in the criminal justice process as a victim-witness can result in re-traumatization. External threats not to testify, fear of retribution, and general hesitation about providing testimony about deeply personal and often violent experiences lead to victims frequently recanting statements made to investigators or failing to attend trial.

HB 4157 proposes a hearsay exception identical to the existing exception allowing for admission of statements regarding incidents of domestic violence when certain conditions are met. The bill retains important reliability safeguards, requiring the court to find the statements have sufficient indicia of trustworthiness before admission. It preserves the opportunity for cross-examination where the declarant testifies while still allowing reliable, contemporaneous statements to be considered by the trier of fact. This approach facilitates a trauma-informed process that recognizes the unique circumstances of such cases and allows juries to receive a complete and accurate picture of events when victims are unable to testify fully.

Enhancing the admissibility of reliable evidence in cases involving particularly vulnerable victims will assist prosecutors in securing appropriate convictions and strengthening deterrence against these types of sex-crimes. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to support HB 4157 as a meaningful reform towards a victim-centered and trauma-informed justice process.