

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nic, and I am writing as a concerned Oregonian to urge your support for HB 4157. This bill represents a vital step toward a more responsive and trauma-informed justice system, specifically for victims of sexual assault and human trafficking.

Our current legal framework often places an undue burden on survivors. In the immediate wake of a crime, a victim's statement to a first responder is frequently the most accurate and uncoerced account of what occurred. However, under existing hearsay rules, these statements are often excluded from trial. This forces victims to relive their trauma months or even years later on the witness stand. It is a process that traffickers and abusers frequently exploit to intimidate witnesses into silence or recantation.

HB 4157 addresses this by allowing statements made to peace officers or firefighters within 24 hours of an incident to be admitted as evidence, provided they meet clear standards of reliability. By prioritizing the reliability of a statement over the technical availability of a witness, this legislation ensures that justice is not derailed simply because a victim is too traumatized or fearful to testify in person.

This is a balanced and narrow reform. It does not strip defendants of their rights. Instead, it provides the court with the most contemporaneous and credible evidence available in cases where the truth is often suppressed by the very nature of the crime. We owe it to the survivors of Oregon to ensure our rules of evidence reflect the reality of the crimes committed against them.

I respectfully ask you to vote "yes" on HB 4157 to help secure justice for our state's most vulnerable citizens.

Sincerely,

Nic Luland

Portland OR, Sumner Neighborhood