



256 Warner Milne Road, Oregon City, OR 97045  
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January 25, 2023

Re: Support for SB 496

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson, and members of the Committee,

My name is Melissa Erlbaum and I serve as the Executive Director of Clackamas Women's Services (CWS) and have worked in victim services for over 25 years. I am here today on behalf of CWS and DV providers statewide in support of SB 496. Listening to the discussion this morning thus far I am grateful for this committee's understanding of the need and the care that you are taking in approaching this important issue.

CWS provides emergency shelter, housing, counseling, legal advocacy, and a range of ongoing community-based services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, stalking, trafficking, and elder abuse.

Ending the cycle of domestic violence commonly falls on the victim to seek safety. For far too many victims, this requires leaving their homes. Domestic violence victims face many barriers and traumatic experiences in this process and being forced to leave a beloved pet behind rises to the top for many of the families we work with.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic violence “71% of women in domestic violence shelters report their abuser threatened, injured, or killed a pet.” Nearly half of the victims stay in abusive situations rather than leave their pets behind. According to the ASPCA --of those that make the anguishing decision to leave behind their pets— “as many as 25% of survivors will return because the abuser is using their pet as a means to get the person back.” In our 35 years of experience providing emergency shelter, this happens at a much higher rate.

More and more nonprofit community-based programs, like CWS, have started to open their shelter doors to pets and at CWS we have seen firsthand the difference that this makes. But this life-saving accessibility creates a new cost for programs that need a reliable resource to continue this work.

Pets are part of the family and the safety of survivors, and their children are intertwined with the safety of their pets. SB 496 will make a significant difference in addressing DV in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Melissa Erlbaum".

Melissa Erlbaum  
Executive Director