



Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and members of the committee,

Re: Yes on SB 271-1

Hello my name is Hilary Ann Levine and I work for the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence Thank you for taking up SB 271-1. The Coalition strongly support this bill, which is essential for the stability and wellbeing of the victims and survivors we serve.

The Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence provides support and technical assistance to community based Domestic and Sexual Violence programs across the state of Oregon. In my position as the Coordinated Entry Program Coordinator I work with community based Domestic and Sexual Violence Programs across the state and the Rural Oregon Continuum of Care to make HUD funded housing resources more accessible to survivors and those from marginalized populations. In speaking with both housing and domestic and sexual violence providers across the state one common theme resounds, access to safe and affordable housing is a paramount need for survivors in the state of Oregon.

Passage of SB 271-1 would allow domestic and sexual violence programs across the state to continue to address both the imminent danger of violence and the often-imminent threat of becoming unhoused. In 2019, both the Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women and the National Network to End Domestic Violence found housing stability to be the greatest issue and unmet need facing survivors in Oregon. In the past year the COVID-19 pandemic has only worked to solidify this need. In the early months of the pandemic our member programs saw increased calls across the state regarding current safety risks due to domestic and sexual violence in the home. The majority of these callers required a safe place to land in order to leave an unsafe living situation. In some cases, due to COVID survivors chose to stay and safety plan until it was safer to access congregate services.

As the pandemic resides our programs anticipate that this increased number of survivors will find safe ways to leave their current housing and will need immediate access to emergency housing and a clear pathway to affordable permanent housing to keep their families safe. The funds allocated by SB 271-1 will be critical in meeting this need. SB 271-1 will continue and increase funding to community-based and culturally specific DVSA programs to assist survivors with housing needs, and fund prevention services to support survivors at risk of

becoming unhoused due to DVSA. These funds are critical in providing housing stability and safety the increased amount of survivors in Oregon who have experienced domestic violence during a global pandemic.

Passage of this bill will allow these survivors to work directly with community based domestic and sexual violence programs and culturally specific programs to meet their housing needs. Programs would be able to offer individualized assistance for those who may need to move to be safe, or who need help with landlord negotiations and housing searches, application processes, and tenant education.

In my position I also work closely with housing providers across the state of Oregon, they are also reporting an increase in demand due to the economic effects of COVID-19. They are having to work quickly to meet all of the need. When working quickly it is harder to incorporate best practices around trauma, safety planning, or culturally responsive services. These best practices may decide whether or not a survivor feels that their individual needs are being met. Directly funding domestic and sexual violence and culturally specific organizations will mean that these survivors can access housing services tailored to their lived experiences and in the long-run may curb the lifelong affects that violence and being unhoused can cause.

The effects of housing instability go beyond the need for temporary, emergency shelter: housing instability affects social determinants of health such economic stability, access to education, and even access to quality healthcare.

According to the CDC, homelessness is connected to negative impacts on physical and mental health, including substance abuse and mental illness. These outcomes for those who are unhoused are compounded by lack of access to care and limited resources. Housing instability affects the most vulnerable in our communities: youth, disabled or elderly, communities of color, and often – survivors of interpersonal violence. The barriers caused by lack of housing, coupled with the dynamics of abuse, create insurmountable barriers to safety, health and wellness, and economic self-sufficiency.

As the growing housing crisis continues in our state, we are grateful to the lawmakers who are prioritizing the health and safety of victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence with this legislation. We urge you to pass SB 271-1.

Thank you for your work.

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