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MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Rep. Kropf, Chair

FROM: Aaron Knott, MCDA Policy Director

SUBJECT: Testimony in support of HB 3443

DATE: 3/19/23

BACKGROUND

Hate crimes are on the rise, both in Oregon and nationally. Prior to 2019, the full picture of hate crimes, known in Oregon law as “bias crimes,” was incomplete. Available data was patchy, and failed to account for the many bias incidents which would not rise to the level of a prosecutable offense but were nonetheless deeply traumatizing for the communities impacted. With the passage of SB 577, a bill spearheaded by Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, Oregon significantly modernized and expanded their approach to hate crimes with a range of reforms which improved data tracking, affirmatively linked victims and survivors with services and made needed reforms to the criminal provisions which allow prosecutors to pursue justice in these cases. At the center of this legislation was the creation of a Bias Response Hotline housed at the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, which provided victims of bias incidents with culturally specific services and support even in the absence of a criminal prosecution.

The years of implementation that have followed SB 577, both for the Oregon Department of Justice and Oregon’s District Attorneys, have highlighted the need for additional reforms to continue to center victims and survivors in our work to combat bias crimes. The Department of Justice has been active in soliciting feedback from across the full range of stakeholders and we are proud to join this broader chorus in

supporting HB 3443. We commend the Attorney General for continuing her work in furthering this important work and in maintaining standing lines of engagement that will continue to bear fruit in the years to come.

We urge the passage of HB 3443.

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