



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

Re: Yes on SB 271-1

Thank you for taking up SB 271-1. I work at Clackamas Women's Services and we support survivors fleeing domestic violence, sexual violence, and elder abuse and trafficking. We strongly support this bill, which is essential for the stability and wellbeing of the victims and survivors we serve.

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 domestic violence, sexual violence, and elder abuse and trafficking.

SB 271-1 offers flexibility to victims and survivors that may not qualify for any other benefits. It would mean all the difference between housing stability and homelessness. SB 271-1 can serve survivors with a wide and unique variety of needs on their path to housing. From providing the funds to replace identification taken by an abuser, to paying off debts incurred during the domestic violence now preventing them from housing, to providing for necessary items to begin working (ultimately allowing for housing) and to supporting a survivor's move into safe housing, these funds are filling gaps that other resources have left survivors holding.

SB 271-1 would allow us to be able to continue to provide highly individualized and creative solutions for victims and survivors. **Victims and survivors have told us that their needs are often left behind by the limitations of other funding sources or resources.** SB 271-1 would be the missing piece for many survivors to move forward with their needs fully met and no past barriers lingering as they seek safety.

SB 271-1 would be particularly helpful during a time in which resources targeted for victims and survivors impacted by Covid-19 have been sporadic. While there have been moments in the past year when our community had a great deal of resources available for those needing to quarantine or isolate, there have also been periods with no other resources available, often starting or ending abruptly. During these times, outreach efforts to the community at large have continued and led to challenges of inconsistency and potential damage to community trust in local agencies as community members receive information about available resources and then find it is no longer available when they need it. This has been a major challenge but could be mitigated by SB 271-1. **These funds would allow us to continue to meet the needs of survivors through the ebb and flow of other resources and to fill gaps across the system which has helped us to maintain the trust of survivors who seek our help.** This trust is so key to successful work with survivors and has benefited our agency's work with them far beyond just meeting needs for housing.

We hope that in sharing the following examples of how these funds have made a life-saving difference for victims/survivors in our community we can demonstrate how critically important this resource is for programs:

On the prevention side, SB 271-1 would allow us to assist participants stay in their safe and stable housing through addressing back rent or utility arrears. One survivor accessed CWS services seeking support after having fled domestic violence with her 5 children and securing new safe housing in our community. However, when her employment was disrupted both by the abuse and Covid19, she was behind in her power bill and unable to catch up and continue to pay her rent. These funds provided the assistance she needed to get caught up in her utility account and to continue living in her new, safe home.

Another survivor came to our agency having experienced financial abuse from her abuser, who would take her money and control her access to a vehicle so she couldn't get to work on time, jeopardizing her employment. When she came to our agency for assistance, we were able to work with her landlord to have her abuser trespass from the property so that she may safely sustain her tenancy and to bring her account with her landlord current so that she can remain in place, she is now able to support herself without the damage of her abuser's interference.

On the rapid rehousing side, SB 271-1 would allow us to assist participants to quickly move back into safe and stable housing. We assisted survivors with past utility and rental debts that were standing in the way of approvals for new housing and others with essential move-in deposits and costs. Another survivor assisted by these funds fled domestic violence out of our area, coming to Clackamas County to be near safe support people she had been isolated from by her abuser. While she was able to get her Section 8 voucher transferred to Clackamas County and had found an apartment that would accept her voucher, her small savings would only cover half of the deposit. Without children, she did not qualify for the TA-DVS grant or other funds meant to aid in securing safe housing, and without the move-in costs, she would be unable to access the long-term assistance provided by her Section 8 voucher. These funds bridged the gap and allowed her to move in to the new housing, which she can now maintain, having a safe home free of the abuse she fled.

SB 271-1 would also provide the flexibility to mitigate or remove barriers to housing, often providing that one essential piece of the puzzle so that a survivor could establish a new life. For one survivor who had secured employment (as had her older children) and was searching for housing, an issue with her vehicle nearly jeopardized it all. Without the ability to get to and from work, the family's jobs were in jeopardy and the potential housing opportunity would fall through without the work. These funds allowed her to get the basic maintenance needed to keep her car in safe running order, allowing continued work and her housing to remain on track.

Many of the survivors we serve are faced with the compounded impacts of abuse and Covid19. One survivor had fled from her abuser and was accessing domestic violence support services, safety planning and support from CWS. She was able to secure an apartment in a community nearby for herself and her 2 small children. However, just as she settled in to her new home, she tested positive for Covid19 and was unable to work for one month. Though she fortunately stayed relatively healthy and well, her financial stability was severely jeopardized. With these funds, we were able to assist her with rent and utilities to stay safely housed during this time, preventing what could have been a disruption that would have cost her housing or put her so far behind, she wouldn't have been able to catch up.

SB 271-1 would also allow us to meet additional needs that arise when setting up a new home, like furniture and household supplies. Often the folks we serve are coming into our housing programs with nothing. While having a safe roof over their head is so important, it is also having a bed to sleep in and a kitchen table to serve their family a meal at. These furnishings really makes it start to feel like a home

again. We work with other agencies that can provide furniture and household supplies so that participants can access everything they need in partnership with other agencies bridging this gap for folks in the community. We also partner with a moving company that provides low cost services to agencies as well to bridge the gap for folks in the community.

I can't say enough about the flexibility that SB 271-1 would provide to meet participants where they are at. We were working with a family that had secured employment and was looking for housing but because of some basic safety issues with their car it was impossible for them to get back and forth to work or additionally transport their kids to their jobs as well. Not only had she secured employment but her adult kids were also working to be able to contribute to rent as well. Paying for some basic safety maintenance for her vehicle meant that she kept her job and was able to find and secure safe and stable housing for her family.

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.

Angie Drake
CWS Shelter/Housing Program Manager