



Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force

TESTIMONY in Support of HB 3476
Submitted to the House Committee on Judiciary
Submitted by: Michele Roland-Schwartz, Executive Director
March 25, 2015

Chair Barker, and members of the Committee,

My name is Michele Roland-Schwartz and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force. The Sexual Assault Task Force is a private, non-profit, non-governmental statewide agency whose mission is to *facilitate and support a victim-centered approach to the prevention of and response to adolescent and adult sexual violence through multi-disciplinary collaboration*. The Task Force is comprised of over 100 appointed Oregonians representing a wide array of local and statewide community partners, including: victim advocates, violence prevention educators, law enforcement, prosecutors, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners and other medical professionals, campus personnel, policy makers, youth, and survivors of sexual violence.

HB 3476, Increasing Victim Access to Confidential Services by Enacting Victim-Advocate Privilege

Victims are faced with a myriad of sensitive, life-altering decisions that can be overwhelming, time-consuming, and a grueling experience immediately following a sexual assault. The added layer of victim blaming, self-blame, and shame compounds any trepidation that a victim feels about who they can disclose to about what happened, or if they disclose at all. Victims may fear retribution from their peers, their employer, or the systems in which they seek support. Victims worry about what family, friends, and partners may think of them. Victims may worry about the potential loss of wages or employment, and their ability to remain in school. Victims worry about their physical health and physical safety. Victims worry about whom they should disclose to, and if they disclose, will they be afforded privacy and confidentiality. When victims do disclose, they may limit what they share, and as a result, responses won't be properly tailored to meet their unique needs.

HB 3476 helps to mitigate the long-term trauma a survivor experiences by offering a safe space whereby a privileged advocate can share accurate information about the sometimes intimidating medical, legal, and support services available to them. The role of advocacy is to provide the full range of options in a safe environment that empowers victims in their decision-making. When survivors are in control, they are more likely to participate in critical services that may increase their safety, health, and path toward healing.



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HB 3476 will meaningfully address survivor's critical needs, in particular, survivor's needs on our college campuses. As Oregon's higher education institutions grapple with compliance of Title IX and Clery, HB 3476 will allow them to meet their federal requirements while simultaneously implementing a survivor-centered service.

For these reasons, passage of HB 3476 is a priority for the Task Force.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MRS", written over a circular flourish.

Michele Roland-Schwartz
Executive Director