



Legislative Testimony

Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association

Thursday, February 14, 2019

The Honorable Representative Jennifer Williamson, Chair
House Judiciary Committee, Members

Re: Testimony in support of HB 2625

Dear Chair Williamson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit the following comments in support of HB 2625.

Increasing Criminal Justice Resources Related to Missing Native American Women

HB 2625 seeks to create a study to determine how to increase criminal justice protective and investigative resources for reporting, identification, and investigation of missing Native American women in Oregon. It has been said that missing and murdered indigenous women disappear three times: “in life, in the media, and in the data.”¹ Of the little data that exists, it’s clear that Native American women go missing, and stay missing, at disproportionately high rates. According to the FBI’s National Crime Information Center databases, at the close of 2017, Native American women made up .07% of ongoing missing persons cases even though they represent only .04% of the population.² Further, it’s been established that Native American women are ten times more likely to be murdered than other Americans.³

Despite these startling statistics, there still does not exist any comprehensive data collection system regarding the number of missing and murdered Native American women in United States.⁴ Without access to comprehensive national statistics and analyses of the issues, it is imperative that states like Oregon investigate the current criminal justice practices relating to the reporting, identification, and investigation of missing Native American women in the state; only then can Oregon determine the extent of the issue and explore solutions.

For the reasons outlined above, OCDLA strongly urges a “yes” to HB 2625. Thank you for your consideration.

/s/ Caitlin Skurky

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¹ Camila Domonoske, *Police in Many U.S. Cities Fail to Track Murdered, Missing Indigenous Women*, NPR (Nov. 15, 2018), <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/15/667335392/police-in-many-u-s-cities-fail-to-track-murdered-missing-indigenous-women>.

² Sharon Cohen, *#NotInvisible: Why are Native American Women Vanishing?*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Sept. 6, 2018), <https://www.apnews.com/cb6efc4ec93e4e92900ec99ccbcb7e05>.

³ Timothy Williams, *Higher Crime, Fewer Charges on Indian Land*, NEW YORK TIMES (Feb. 20, 2012), <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/21/us/on-indian-reservations-higher-crime-and-fewer-prosecutions.html>.

⁴ Mary Annette Premer, *Missing and Murdered: No One Knows How Many Native Women Have Disappeared*, INDIAN COUNTRY TODAY (Apr. 11, 2016), https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/missing-and-murdered-no-one-knows-how-many-native-women-have-disappeared-lGvN2Pw97E6Dg_-guqcpMQ/.

About OCDLA

The Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association (OCDLA) is a private, non-partisan, non-profit bar association of attorneys who represent juveniles and adults in delinquency, dependency, criminal prosecutions, appeals, civil commitment, and post-conviction relief proceedings throughout the state of Oregon. The Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association serves the defense and juvenile law communities through continuing legal education, public education, networking, and legislative action.

OCDLA promotes legislation beneficial to the criminal and juvenile justice systems that protects the constitutional and statutory rights of those accused of crime or otherwise involved in delinquency and dependency systems as well as to the lawyers and service providers who do this difficult work. We also advocate against issues that would harm our goals of reform within the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

For questions or comments contact:

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