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Oregon House Passes Bill to Close Sentencing Loophole in Domestic Violence Cases

SALEM, Ore.— Today, the Oregon House overwhelmingly passed [HB 2975A](#), legislation that restores courts' ability to impose separate sentences for distinct acts of violence—such as strangulation and assault—committed in the context of domestic violence. The bill passed with strong bipartisan support.

The legislation, championed by **Representative Annessa Hartman (D-Gladstone/Oregon City)**, addresses the fallout of the 2024 Oregon Court of Appeals decision in *State v. Miles*, which interpreted the domestic violence statute in a way that requires courts to merge multiple charges—such as strangulation, assault, and menacing—into a single conviction if they all fall under the broad statutory definition of “abuse.”

“I find it deeply troubling that Oregon law, as it stands, can treat strangulation and assault as one offense simply because the victim is a partner or spouse,” said **Rep. Hartman**. “Strangulation is not just another form of assault—it’s a lethal act of control. Victims of domestic violence deserve better than to see the harm they endured minimized by a technicality.”

Under current law, a defendant who strangles and punches their intimate partner in the same incident may receive only a single conviction and a lighter sentence than if those same crimes were committed against a stranger. HB 2975A clarifies that the “constituting domestic violence” designation is not an element of a criminal offense for the purpose of merger, allowing courts to sentence each charge independently, as they would in any non-domestic setting.

“This is about fairness, consistency, and protecting survivors,” said **Rep. Dacia Grayber (D-SW Portland & East Beaverton)**, a sponsor of the bill and strangulation expert in her capacity as a professional paramedic. “We should never let a label that’s supposed to help victims end up shielding offenders from accountability.”

The bill emerged from the House Judiciary Committee with unanimous support and represents the collaborative work of prosecutors, defense attorneys, the judiciary, and the Department of Justice.

“This bill ensures that the law reflects the full extent of harm suffered by survivors,” said **Rep. Emerson Levy (D-Central Oregon)**. “When someone strangles their partner, that is not the same as a punch or a slap. Strangulation victims are 750% more likely to be killed by their abusers. Our legal system must recognize the difference.”

The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

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