



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

April 13, 2015

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Oregon House Votes to Protect Sexual Assault Victims

Two bills that passed would ensure victims' privacy and protect against witness intimidation

The Oregon House today voted to increase protections for victims of sexual assault and violence, passing two bills that will protect victims' privacy and make third-party intimidation of victims by defendants a crime.

House Bill 3476 addresses the serious problem of sexual assault on college campuses. It ensures that when a victim of sexual assault seeks support services from an advocate, their communications are all kept confidential. HB 3476 creates a statutory privilege preventing the disclosure of confidential communications without the victim's permission.

In March of 2014, a young woman at University of Oregon was raped by three fellow students. She sought counseling from a university therapist. The U of O, anticipating she might bring a lawsuit, obtained her records without the woman's consent. That violation of privacy caused an uproar—many said it would prevent other survivors from reaching out for help. HB 3476 will ensure this doesn't happen again.

“This bill gives us a chance to make sure people who have experienced sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking can obtain the help and information they need in privacy,” said Rep. Ann Lininger (D-Lake Oswego). “It puts control over getting help and seeking justice into the survivor's hands.”

A separate bill, **House Bill 3466A**, would expand protections of assault victims from intimidation by defendants.

Currently, when a defendant is charged with a sex crime or domestic violence, they are prohibited through court order from contacting the victim while in custody or upon release. However, it is not uncommon for a defendant to still try and contact a victim either directly or through a family member or friend.

HB 3466A would expand upon the current statutory requirements, making it clear that the court order prohibiting the defendant from having contact with a victim—specifically in sex crime and domestic violence cases—must also include attempted contact by the defendant, either in person or through a third party.

“We need to make sure that victims of domestic violence or sexual assault can come forward to seek help without fear that they will put themselves in further harm,” said Rep. Jennifer

Williamson (D-Portland). “The bills we passed today will ensure that the law does a better job of safeguarding their privacy and safety.”

Both bills passed unanimously and now go to the Senate.

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