



LANE COUNTY
**DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE
COUNCIL**

T. T. A.

March 17, 2006

Dear Board of County Commissioner's,

Four have died since the end of December. How many more children must grow up without a parent before we will seriously address the public safety issue of domestic violence. We stand before you today asking why this crucial service is not being adequately funded and why on the list of priorities that the Commission submitted in February of 2005 it ranks number 62 out of 79.

Due to the dangerous risk posed to the safety of our community by domestic violence perpetrators, we unequivocally ask that the County fund the excellent supervision work done by Lane County Parole and Probation officers of these misdemeanor offenders.

The proposal that will be submitted later today on behalf of Parole and Probation has enlightened the community to the lack of funding being provided to supervise person-to-person misdemeanants. The majority of these 370 cases currently being supervised are people who have committed violent acts against their intimate partner.

We understand that in today's ever shrinking budget that hard decisions need to be made. We have seen that when acts of domestic violence do not result in immediate consequences, the result can be a preventable homicide. Putting people at needless risk is not a responsible option.

We know that when a woman is murdered in the United States, in one out of three cases it is her husband or boyfriend, in Oregon it is one out of two cases. We can and we must prioritize the available tools for accountability before we have no choice but to be subject to the extraordinary expenditures triggered by these homicides.

From a practical standpoint, having an probation officer to whom batterer intervention specialists, social workers, children's caregivers and family members can report threats and other escalations in behavior, and who can mete out direct consequences, is a vital part of that protection. Without the necessary funding, we lose that link of safety. With no one in the system to deliver immediate consequences to the offender, the victim is left with the message that they are in this alone. Is it any wonder that so many victims return to frightening circumstances when the community has in effect told them "you are on your own?" Or perpetrators of domestic violence continue to feel they can assault their loved ones with impunity?

We applaud Lane County Parole and Probation for working with this challenging population for so many years without adequate funding and ask you take to heart the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Please use your remarkable insight, creativity and knowledge of the county's programs and systems to explore workable options; don't send the message that domestic violence is tolerated by our community.