



The Honorable Ned Lamont
Governor of Connecticut
Connecticut State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

December 7, 2021

Dear Governor Lamont:

A temporary, but significant 35% cut in available federal funds for state Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants means at least 52,504 victims stand to lose access to services from Connecticut's victim service organizations over the next two years (2022-2024) without additional support. This number reflects only the people we know about. We know there are others out there who need our help that we are not reaching, and we are working tirelessly to change that through outreach, education and raising awareness. As colleagues, representing victim service organizations and VOCA grantees, we write to respectfully request \$12,296,962 million in one-time funding to be allocated to Connecticut's Office of Victim Services (OVS) for distribution to victim service provider agencies assisting survivors of violent crime. Without your support and additional funds, Connecticut residents who have been victimized by domestic violence, sexual violence, child abuse, stalking and other crimes will not receive and/or have access to the quality services they deserve.

Together, we represent seven local, regional, and statewide programs serving victims of crime, including survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking; survivors of human trafficking, child abuse and neglect and families impacted by homicide. Collectively, we provide the state's essential services to most crime victims served throughout the State of Connecticut each year. Losing nearly half of the available VOCA funds to temporary federal funding reductions, coupled with flat state funding since 2008, will have devastating consequences for victims in the State of Connecticut. Now, we face the possibility of severely reducing our capacity to serve victims at a time when we know we should be doing more than ever for them.

Domestic violence and child abuse are linked to community stress and crisis. As Connecticut reopens, we anticipate the needs of victims and their children continuing to increase, as they are part of a larger group, of mostly women and children, that have been most affected by the pandemic. We know their recovery has been slower in comparison to other groups throughout the state and we also know that their needs, through this recovery process, are more complex.

Over the last year and a half, we have witnessed the unique impact the pandemic has had on majority women and children. From increased violence to strained access to social services, our organizations have been stepping up to conduct intensive case management for survivors and their families with complex needs. There has been a ten percent increase in child sexual violence, thirty percent increase in homicides and non-fatal shootings in Connecticut, and this year alone, nine intimate partner homicides, three of which have been witnessed by children.

When victims do not receive the support they need, especially as children, the long-term effects of trauma manifest in several ways, including chronic physical and mental health issues, depression, suicide, substance use disorders, and difficulty maintaining employment. These issues, when not addressed, can have a greater economic burden on the state.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates the lifetime cost of rape is \$122,461 per victim, domestic violence is \$103,767 for a female victim, \$23,414 for a male victim and \$210,012 for nonfatal child maltreatment. These lifetime costs have a significant impact on the State of Connecticut. Investments made in our organizations, programs, services, and workforce, would not only help to limit the fiscal impact that abuse has on victims and their families, but would decrease the financial burden placed on Connecticut taxpayers over time. Making this one-time, temporary investment, in services for victims of crime will directly help our efforts to reduce future abuse and crime through proactive services, advocacy and innovative collaborations across public agencies and private organizations.

Investing \$12,296,962 in victim service organizations right now means that we can prioritize a victim's ongoing needs. When we help victims avoid homelessness, maintain stable employment, access quality, affordable childcare, and keep children in school with the supports they need, we not only lighten the load on state agencies and other community service providers, but we also create a brighter future for the State of Connecticut. When we assist law enforcement by supporting victims during civil, criminal, and family court proceedings, we help make justice a reality. When we help victims recover from trauma, access mental health services and other essential medical services for them and their families, we improve their long-term health, safety, economic stability, and overall quality of life and we help to positively change the outcomes for the next generation.

For these reasons, we, the undersigned organizations, respectfully request that \$12,296,962 of one-time funding be directed to Connecticut's Office of Victim Services to offset the temporary loss of VOCA revenue. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Scanlon at 959-202-5001 or mscanlon@ctcadv.org, and/or Krystal Rich at 860-670-9447.

Respectfully,

Meghan Scanlon, President & CEO, Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Beth Hamilton, Executive Director, Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence

Jessica Pizzano, Survivors of Homicide, Inc.

Bob Garguillo, Executive Director, Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Yvette Young, Associate VP of Programs & Advocacy, The Village,

Krystal Rich, Executive Director, Connecticut Children's Alliance

Erin Williamson, VP of Global Programs and Strategy, Love146