

November 17, 2021

The Honorable Lawrence Hogan, Jr.
Governor, State of Maryland
State House, 2d floor
Annapolis, MD 21401
Via email to:
Amelia Chasse Alcivar, amelia.alcivar@maryland.gov
Erin Chase, erin.chase1@maryland.gov

Re: **Preventing Cuts to Victim Services**

Dear Governor Hogan:

Preventing crime and keeping our communities safe are some of the fundamental responsibilities of government. We know this issue is important to you. We also know that when government fails to prevent crime, victims need help. Thank you for your recent decision to use federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to restore support for victim services in Maryland. The almost 20% cut would be devastating to the over 120 experienced and dedicated programs that the State has chosen to fund both before and during the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic.

Restoring the funding cut announced on September 24th was an important first step in ensuring that Maryland's network of crime victim services providers stays strong and that survivors have the help they need. Your decision to use ARPA funds to reverse these cuts to Victim of Crime Act grants will help survivors until fall of 2022.

We are writing to urge Maryland to continue to fill the temporary dip in federal Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) funding. As you know, VOCA was funded through fines imposed on defendants in federal criminal cases. This pool of funding was reduced when federal prosecution strategy moved from seeking convictions to entering into non-prosecution agreements. Fortunately, this summer Congress passed the [VOCA Fix bill](#) with bi-partisan support and [President Biden signed it](#) into law. This will replenish the pool of federal funding that has long supported vital victim services. But this will take an estimated 2-3 years. We ask that Maryland step up to the plate and fill in this dip in funding

It is important to understand that the victim services funding crisis is not structural. This is a temporary reduction in federal support. And, it is a crisis that Maryland is well positioned to address. Maryland has a historic budget surplus. There are currently \$2.5 billion in excess funds and increased revenue projections exceeding \$2 billion for the current and upcoming fiscal years. The temporary gap in federal funding can be easily covered by existing resources.

Please keep in mind the people and programs that would be harmed if Maryland fails to fill the dip in VOCA funding. There are over 120 programs funded by VOCA and the reality is that we need to increase, not decrease services. These vital programs include:

- Victim-Witness Coordinators in State's Attorneys Offices and local law enforcement agencies. Without support, crime victims may not learn about court dates or have the

support they need to testify against criminals. VOCA supports programs in prosecutors' offices in Anne Arundel, Howard, Prince George's, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Montgomery, as well as at the Frederick County Sheriff's Office, Howard County Police, and more.

- Domestic Violence Shelters and Supportive Services. Survivors of intimate partner violence across the State receive the support they need to help escape violence and end abuse.
- Court Appointed Special Advocates. These trained adults help make sure that abused children have advocates and do not get lost in the systems of courts and government.
- Culturally Specific Services. VOCA supports grants to the Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington, FreeState Justice, DAWN (Deaf Abused Women Network), Disability Rights Maryland (for services to people developmental disabilities who have been abused), Asian Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Center, and others.
- Homicide Survivor Support. Helping the families and loved ones of Marylanders who have been murdered.
- Anti-Human Trafficking Advocacy and Assistance. Programs supporting the multiple and complex needs of survivors of trafficking, ranging from housing to counseling to legal services.
- Rape Crisis Centers. Sexual Assault Survivors in every jurisdiction in Maryland receive counseling, advocacy, and legal services with VOCA support.
- Child Advocacy Centers. These important programs help ensure that when children are abused, the investigation into the crime is child focused and trauma informed.
- Responding to Elder Abuse. Our older community members who have been abused receive help from VOCA funded programs such as the Washington County Commission on Aging.

The list goes on and the need is great. Please do not abandon Maryland's victims of crime and their need for services. Programs cannot simply tighten their belts and collaborate to save costs – they already work together every day, pay their employees too little, and are unable to meet the needs of everyone who seeks help.

Governor, Maryland's victims of crime need your help and your leadership. The State has the ability to fill the temporary dip in VOCA funding. Please include this vital support in the FY2023 budget.

Respectfully,

Baltimore County State's Attorney Office
Baltimore Jewish Council
Board of Child Care
CASA, Inc.
Catholic Charities of Baltimore
Center for Hope
Community Justice Action Fund

Disability Rights Maryland
Dove Center (DVSARC, Inc.)
Family Crisis Resource Center, Inc.
For All Seasons, Inc.
Frederick County State's Attorney's Office
FreeState Justice, Maryland's LGBTQ Advocates
Gender Violence Clinic, University of Maryland Carey School of Law
The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention
Heartly House, Inc.
The Human Trafficking Prevention Project at the University of Baltimore School of Law
JCADA
Life Crisis Center
Maryland CASA Association
Maryland Children's Alliance
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA)
Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence Inc. (MNADV)
Maryland State's Attorneys' Association (MSAA)
Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service
Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office
Prince George's County State's Attorney Office
Rebuild, Overcome, and Rise (ROAR) Center at UMB
Southern Md. Center for Family Advocacy
TurnAround, Inc.
The Women's Law Center of Maryland