



MASSACHUSETTS CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

For Immediate release#####

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VICTIM SERVICE AGENCY LEADERS RELEASE OPEN LETTER TO STATE SENATORS
Ask for inclusion of \$70 million in ARPA budget to save services

Dear State Senators of the Commonwealth:

We, the undersigned, write to ask your support of Senator Julian Cyr's amendment #225, *Sustainability of Victim Services Trust Fund*. We represent leadership from a cross section of major organizations that rely on federal Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) funds, administered in our state by the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA), to effectively serve some of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable residents: child, adult and elder survivors of trauma, including sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, trafficking and homicide.

Due to a problem with the VOCA funding on the national level, federal funds dedicated to help victims of crime have faced depletion. That problem was fixed on the federal level but still left Massachusetts facing a 30% reduction in funds over the next three years. The timing of this reduction could not be worse. The effects of the pandemic exacerbated the trauma for victims of crime as the stay-at-home advisory left survivors more isolated and without access to care. Senator Cyr's amendment would stabilize victim service programming in Massachusetts as organizations grapple with the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on victims of crime as well as survivor populations in underserved and marginalized communities. This request would be a one-time fix to ensure that there would be no disruption in service delivery.

Funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) can provide a unique opportunity to innovatively support all crime victim services in Massachusetts. VOCA funding supports services for all victims of crime including children's advocacy centers, sexual assault programs, domestic violence programs, homicide bereavement programs, victim legal assistance services, elder abuse programs and other services to underserved crime victims who were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Moreover, VOCA funding in Massachusetts supports 161 victim service programs throughout all counties in the Commonwealth. In FY 2021, VOCA funding served a record number – over 96,000 – victims, the highest in MOVA's history. Of these funds, 72% support personnel and staffing which would be in jeopardy as grants are reduced.

The American Rescue Plan Act is set to address, among many objectives, the effects of the pandemic by maintaining the workforce and ensuring human and behavioral health services. We cannot think of a more appropriate use of these funds. We applaud Senator Cyr for

submitting an amendment to the Senate budget, and we urge you to support his effort to make victim services whole in the Commonwealth.

Respectfully,

Janis Broderick, The Elizabeth Freeman Center

Stephanie Brown, Casa Myrna

Sue Chandler, DOVE (Domestic Violence Ended), Inc.

Clementina Chery, Louis D. Brown Peace Institute

Elizabeth Dineen, YWCA-Western Massachusetts

Duane de Four, Boston Area Rape Crisis Center

Tom King, Massachusetts Children's Alliance, Inc

Ellen LaPointe, Fenway Health

Stacy Malone, Victim Rights Law Center

Andy Pond, Justice Resource Institute

Debra Robbin, Jane Doe, Inc

Susan Ross, The Second Step

Dawn Sauma and Cristina Ayala, Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence

Marcia Szymanski, New Hope, Inc.

Isa Woldegiorguis, The Center for Hope and Healing

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The Massachusetts Children's Alliance is the coalition of the 12 Children's Advocacy Centers throughout the Commonwealth. We pioneer the most promising, leading-edge ways that help victims of child abuse receive the best possible care.

If you would like more information, please call Tom King at (617) 573-9800 ext. 222 or email tking@machildrensalliance.org.