

February 8, 2024

Wisconsin State Legislators,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to you today to request your support for programs across the state of Wisconsin providing crime victim services.

The Wisconsin Department of Justice, Office of Crime Victim Services provides funding to nonprofit and government victim service agencies across the state. This includes organizations work in partnership with law enforcement to provide domestic and family violence services, sexual assault services, child advocacy centers services to serve children suspected to be victims of sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, who have witnessed a violent crime, and more. The federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant is one of the funding mechanisms the state uses to support these organizations in providing direct services to victims of violent crime including conducting forensic interviews, safety planning, community service referrals, counseling, crisis intervention, and advocacy. VOCA is funded through fines paid by federal prosecutions and distributed via a funding formula to states. As a result of decreased federal fines due to an increase in deferred prosecution agreements, Wisconsin and states across the nation are anticipating a significant reduction in VOCA funding.

As organizations who support victims of crime across our state, many of which rely significantly on VOCA funds, we are seriously concerned with the impact this funding reduction will have on services provided across Wisconsin. Anticipated VOCA fund reductions in Wisconsin are estimated to be approximately 40% which will reduce VOCA grant award amounts leaving organizations no choice but to reduce staffing, services, and offerings to victims of crime at some of the most vulnerable times in their lives.

Children who have been abused, survivors of gun violence, individuals leaving abusive partnerships, those who have been sexually assaulted, and all who our organizations serve along with law enforcement partners have come to rely on these vital community services. As such, we ask for your support to invest additional funds to ensure programs and services across Wisconsin can continue to comprehensively support those we care for, serve, and protect.

We appreciate your consideration on behalf of Wisconsinites who rely on these critical supports and services and respectfully ask you to support SB 877 and AB 940 lead by Senators Jesse James and Melissa Agard and Representatives Pat Snyder and Sue Conley. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Child Advocacy Centers of Wisconsin

Child Advocacy Center of North-Central Wisconsin, Children's Wisconsin

Chippewa Valley Child Advocacy Center, Children's Wisconsin

Fox Valley Child Advocacy Center, Children's Wisconsin

Green County Child Advocacy Center

Kenosha County Child Advocacy Center, Children's Wisconsin

Lakeshore Regional Child Advocacy Center
Marshfield Child Advocacy Center
Milwaukee Child Advocacy Center, Children's Wisconsin
Racine County Child Advocacy Center, Children's Wisconsin
Safe Harbor Child Advocacy Center
Stepping Stones Child Advocacy Center
The C.A.R.E Center
Walworth County Child Advocacy Center, Children's Wisconsin
Willow Tree Cornerstone Child Advocacy Center
YWCA Care House
Children's Wisconsin
Milwaukee Professional Police Association
UW Health
UW School of Medicine & Public Health
Wisconsin State Lodge Fraternal Order of Police
Marshfield Clinic Health System and Marshfield Children's
Milwaukee Professional Firefighters Association Local 215
Sojourner Family Peace Center
Aurora Health Care
Women and Children's Horizons, Kenosha
Association of State Prosecutors
Women's Center, Inc.
Kenosha Police Department
Wisconsin Professional Police Association
Badger State Sheriffs' Association
Wisconsin Sheriffs & Deputy Sheriffs Association
Pleasant Prairie Police Department
Wisconsin District Attorneys Association