

Submitter: Melanie Taylor Prummer
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3196

On behalf of Peace at Home Advocacy Center we are submitting testimony in support of HB 3196, which appropriates money to the Department of Justice to backfill reductions in federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants.

Peace at Home Advocacy Center is a community-based non-profit agency serving Douglas County since 1978. Peace at Home focuses exclusively on providing comprehensive services to victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking and is also the only victim/survivor services agency in the county that provides crisis intervention services through a 24/hour Hotline, supported by certified advocates. Our Mission: dedicated to community free from family violence sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking through empowerment, support and education. Our agency answers over 4,000 calls per year, serving 1,200 survivors across our programs including 600 people accessing support for filing protective orders.

Background

In 1984, Congress signed VOCA into law and created the Crime Victims Fund (CVF). VOCA funding (appropriated from the CVF) is the primary source of federal grants for victim services, including services for survivors of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking, elder abuse, and other crimes. It supports victims in some of the most high-risk scenarios who are experiencing strangulation, stalking, and an increased risk of serious injury and homicide. It also matches 75% of eligible state victim compensation funding.

Impact

Programs across the state rely on VOCA funding to provide services, including Children's Advocacy Centers, District Attorney Victim Assistance Programs (DAVAPs), Community-based Nonprofit Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (DVSA) Programs, and Campus Sexual Assault Programs. These grants fund vital services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence, ranging from crisis intervention to long-term healing.

VOCA funds support many programs in Douglas County including staffing the 24-hour Crisis Line, emergency shelter and housing programs, and legal advocacy services. Funding has expanded our program to Co-Locate advocate at the courthouse and police departments. Services at risk of being eliminated without funding include:

- Advocates assist victims with filing temporary protective orders including the Family Abuse Prevention Act (FAPA), Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities

Abuse Prevention Act (EPPDAPA), Sexual Abuse Protection Order (SAPO) and Stalking Protective Orders (SPO)

- Assist with preparing for and providing emotional support at contested protective order hearings
- Provide emotional support during trial or family court hearings
- Offer other advocacy and referrals to law enforcement, Legal Aid Services of Oregon and Modest Means Attorneys
- Responding to law enforcement referrals and safety planning with victims at high risk of being murdered or seriously injured

Bipartisan efforts are underway federally to create a long-term solution for the CVF, and your support in creating a bridge for organizations like ours to stabilize funding and our ability to offer life-saving services to survivors is essential. We know that supporting victims of crime is a nonpartisan issue, and these efforts will continue. There is a separate bill in the Oregon Senate to support a federal fix—SJM 2 Urging Congress to fund VOCA.

For the above reasons, we urge you to support this request for bridge funding of VOCA grants by passing HB 3196. Crime victims and survivors in Oregon deserve the safety and well-being that these funds afford. Organizations like ours that provide these services cannot continue delivering them without your support. Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
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