February 6, 2025

Re: Support for SJM 2 - Urging Congress to enact legislation alleviating the funding crisis in the Crime Victims Fund.

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

On behalf of Clackamas Women's Services (CWS), we are submitting testimony in support of SJM 2, which urges Congress to enact legislation alleviating the funding crisis in the Crime Victims Fund.

The mission of Clackamas Women's Services (CWS) is to break the isolation of domestic and sexual violence. Incorporated in 1985 as Clackamas County's first domestic violence shelter, CWS is a community-based organization providing comprehensive services to survivors of domestic/dating violence, sexual assault, elder and vulnerable adult abuse, human trafficking, exploitation, and stalking.

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.**

The Crime Victims Fund Stabilization Act (H.R. 909) has been introduced in the House, sponsored by Rep. Ann Wagner (R-MO) with bipartisan co-leads from around the country. The bill redirects unobligated funds collected through the False Claims Act to the Crime Victims Fund through Fiscal Year 2029, stabilizing the Crime Victims Fund during recent declines.

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.

CWS utilizes these funds to support children and adult survivors with wide-ranging crisis intervention and long-term supportive services, which would be in jeopardy if cuts were to go through. At-risk services include:

- Emergency shelter—we provide over 11,000 nights of shelter annually.
- 24/7 crisis line—supporting nearly 2,000 survivors annually.
- Sexual assault hospital response—launched last year to support survivors when they need it most.
- Community-based services, including advocacy at A Safe Place Family Justice Center—the only walk-in center in Clackamas County—where we serve an average of 15 people each day, most are accessing our services for the first time. Additionally, we provide on-going support services such as emergency and long-term safety planning, legal advocacy, food assistance, and help with restraining orders. There were 3,179 visits to the center in 2024.
- Youth services for more than 600 children and teens throughout Clackamas County, including: advocacy, support groups, art-based therapy groups, community-building, and a yearlong mentoring program, as well as parenting workshops, support groups, and community-building events for 138 adults.

VOCA funding plays a significant role in creating the safety and security we want to see in our communities.

For the above reasons, we urge you to support this request to pass SJM 2 and urge Congress to pass the Crime Victims Fund Stabilization Act without delay.

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,

Melissa Erlbaum
Executive Director