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Attorney General

February 6, 2024

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Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
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The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
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The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
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IMMEDIATE PAST
PRESIDENT

Dave Yost
Ohio
Attorney General

RE: Support Bridge Funding for VOCA Fund

Dear Speaker, Majority Leader, and Minority Leaders,

We, the undersigned Attorneys General, write to urge Congress to provide bridge funding to the Crime Victims Fund. Without this funding, our states will be unable to properly serve victims of crime.

The Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (“VOCA”) established the Crime Victims Fund (the “VOCA Fund”), which is the primary financial source for victim services in all 50 states, five U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. Many of our own offices administer victim assistance grant programs financed through VOCA.

The VOCA Fund supports the provision of essential direct services and assistance for crime victims and survivors, including medical care, mental health counseling, lost wages, courtroom advocacy, and temporary housing.¹ The VOCA Fund also provides support for initiatives that benefit victims of crime, including federal, state, and tribal victim service programs; crime victim compensation; discretionary grant awards; victim specialists in U.S. Attorney’s Offices and the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and the federal victim notification system.² Additionally,

¹ Office for Victims of Crime, *Crime Victims Fund, OVC Fact Sheet*, <https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/pubs/crimevictimsfundfs/intro.html> (last visited Jan. 9, 2024).

² 34 U.S.C. §§ 20101-11

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Brian Kane
Executive Director

VOCA Fund grants are a critical funding source.

Congress recently acknowledged the importance of the VOCA Fund and supplemented its funding sources. In 2021, Congress passed the VOCA Fix Act, which allows monetary recoveries from federal deferred prosecutions and non-prosecution agreements to replenish the balance of the Fund. All 56 Attorneys General argued that such a fix was necessary,³ and we applaud Congress for its leadership.

While the VOCA Fix Act was necessary, it was, unfortunately, not sufficient.

The revenue for the VOCA Fund is generated from offenders convicted of federal crimes, not from taxes.⁴ And based on the current balance⁵ of the VOCA Fund and the FY24 appropriations bills currently under consideration in Congress, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime estimates that, as compared to 2023 funding, the 2024 funding for victim services grants will be 41 percent lower nationwide.⁶ The anticipated below-average deposits into the VOCA Fund place the projected fiscal year 2024 awards at \$700 million below fiscal year 2023 amounts. A decline of that magnitude will have devastating consequences for victims of crime.

To sustain critical services and support for victims of crime, it is vital for Congress to provide short-term funding while the Fund is replenished by criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalties, and special assessments collected by federal courts, federal prosecutors, and the Bureau of Prisons.

Without prompt action to support the VOCA Fund, many victim service programs throughout the country may be forced to close, and the victims and survivors those programs serve could be left without services and support, endangering their safety and wellbeing. These burdens are likely to fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable victims, including members of rural, underserved, or impoverished communities. As victims are often also witnesses to the crimes against them, moreover, the lack of services and support for them may impact our states' abilities to hold offenders accountable and thereby undermine public safety.

Congressionally authorized bridge funding could provide stability to crime victims and victim service providers and avoid harm to public safety. As such, we respectfully call upon Congress to authorize adequate short-term funding to prevent severe cuts to the VOCA Fund while it is being replenished.

³ NAAG, *56 Attorneys General Urge Congress to Adopt Key Changes to the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)*, <https://www.naag.org/press-releases/56-attorneys-general-urge-congress-to-adopt-key-changes-to-the-victims-of-crime-act-voca/> (last visited Jan. 9, 2024).

⁴ 34 U.S.C. § 20101(b).

⁵ Office for Victims of Crime, *FY 2004 – FY 2024 Crime Victims Fund End of Year Balance (\$ millions)(as of 11/30/2023)* <https://ovc.ojp.gov/about/crime-victims-fund/fy-2007-2024-cvf-balance.pdf> (last visited Jan. 9, 2024).

⁶ Department of Justice, *Summary of Requirements for Office of Justice Programs*, https://www.justice.gov/d9/2023-03/3_ojp_fy_24_pb_technical_exhibits_mandatory_accounts_final_to_jmd_cleared_3.17.23.pdf (last visited Jan. 9, 2024).

Thank you for your leadership in 2021. We ask that you again ensure that crime victims across the country have the support they need, which is critical for public safety.

Sincerely,



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Illinois Attorney General



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Ohio Attorney General



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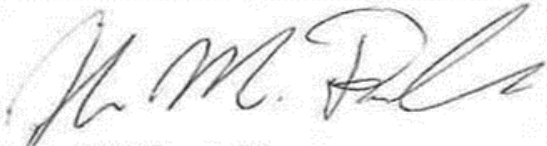
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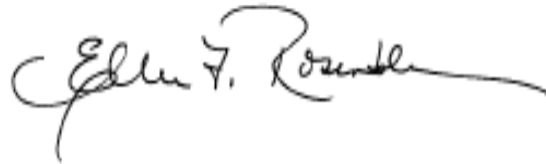
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