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Contact: Matthew Hamlett
Matthew.Hamlett@asm.ca.gov
916-319-2050

Reyes' Legislation Requiring California to Support Crime Victim Services Passes Public Safety Committee

(Sacramento, CA) — Today AB 1956 by Assemblymember Eloise Reyes (D-Colton), known as the Crime Victim Services Stabilization Act, passed on a unanimous bipartisan basis out of the Assembly Public Safety Committee with a 8-0 vote. This legislation requires California to support funding for essential crime victim services when there are reductions in funding of more than 10% compared to the previous year. Currently, the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) deposits funding into the Crime Victims Fund, which provides the largest federal funding source for victim services providers in the country. These programs include rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, child abuse programs, human trafficking services, legal aide, and more. The fund will have a shortfall in California alone, of over \$120 million this fiscal year, affecting service providers across the state. This reduction has the potential to cut these critical services in half-statewide leading to fewer available services and causing some providers to close their doors entirely, leaving survivors of crimes without access to essential services.

“Regardless of our budgetary constraints, how we spend our money in California is a reflection of our values,” said Reyes. “California stands by victims of crimes and we are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of these survivors who deserve consistent and reliable access to healing services. I appreciate the support of my colleagues today and am committed to fighting to fund VOCA.”

Assemblymember Eloise Gómez Reyes, the Majority Emeritus Leader of the California State Assembly, is available for interviews in Spanish and English. She represents Assembly District 50, which includes all or parts of the cities of Colton, Fontana, Loma Linda, Ontario, Rancho Cucamonga, Redlands, Rialto and San Bernardino, as well as unincorporated Bloomington.

"This substantial anticipated cut in VOCA funding will disproportionately affect hundreds (if not thousands) of Black/African American and Latino unserved and underserved victims of domestic violence. This population already experiences a lack of resources in their communities and this reduction will exacerbate the problem." — Donna Derden, Chief Operating Officer of the Jenesse Center and Member of the Culturally Responsive Domestic Violence Network

"This is a critical time in our communities, a time where support is essential for the well-being of families. We need to unite and find solutions. Decreasing VOCA funds is not a solution; it will further impact victims and create more despair and harm. Unity in this effort to stabilize funding will support our families to create pathways for healing, safety and stability." — Barbara Kappos, Executive Director of East Los Angeles Women's Center (ELAWC) and Member of the Culturally Responsive Domestic Violence Network

"Service providers throughout the state report escalating requests for assistance and rising rates of violence in communities. At the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (Cast), we have a 15% increase in emergency cases compared to 2022. Severing the lifeline of care that these services provide is simply untenable. If we are unable to provide the services that human trafficking survivors need, they will be increasingly vulnerable to the dangers of being re-trafficked." — Kay Buck, CEO, Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking

"The cuts to federal funding for core services to victims of crime in California will have a lasting impact on low-income communities if the State does not invest in these services. VOCA grants in CA have supported survivors of intimate partner violence in securing restraining orders, have helped parents get access to public benefits for themselves and their children, and have even helped workers who are victims of wage theft sue their employers for stolen wages. VOCA grants help keep families safe and provide financial stability. We strongly support AB 1956's goal of funding this work." — Salena Copeland, Executive Director of the Legal Aid Association of CA

"The organizations supported by the Victim of Crimes Act deserve to remain funded, regardless of the ebbs and flows of the federal budget. Domestic violence programs are critical emergency services and without them, survivors in California would lack support in accessing resources that allow them to stay safely housed and heal. California has an opportunity to create stable funding for domestic violence programs across the state, which would mean that survivors would not need to be turned away due to programs downsizing or closing. We call on Governor Newsom and the state legislature to follow the lead of Assemblymember Reyes and to make this critical investment in the essential services that serve crime victims." — Krista Colón, Senior Director of Public Policy Strategies, California Partnership to End Domestic Violence

"Cuts to victim services are coming at a time when demand is higher than ever - our state cannot turn its back on survivors of crime, California must step-in to support our safety net. We are deeply appreciative of Assemblymember Reyes for this important bill and advocating for these essential services for survivors." - Sandra Henriquez, CEO, VALOR

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According to Mieko Failey, Director of Legal Services at The LGBTQ Center of Long Beach, “LGBTQ survivors of violence face tremendous barriers to resources and safety because of bias and discrimination based on gender identity and/or sexual orientation. Cuts to VOCA will have unprecedented impacts on some of the most vulnerable survivors who desperately need the LGBTQ and culturally-specific programs funded by VOCA.”

Terra Russell-Slavin, Chief Impact Officer at the Los Angeles LGBT Center added, “At a time of unprecedented violence against LGBTQ communities, the proposed VOCA cuts will devastate services if California does not step up to fund these critical services. There are already far too few services for LGBTQ survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and hate crimes. We need California to be a leader in how the country cares for and responds to our most vulnerable survivors.”

In California alone, during the 2021-2022 fiscal year, VOCA funded 354,227 emergency shelter nights for domestic violence survivors and their children, services for 46,461 individual experiencing sexual violence and services for over 42,000 survivors of crime.

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