

CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Support. Advocate. Prevent.

Appropriations Committee

HB 6439 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023.
Judicial and Corrections Subcommittee

Testimony of: Beth Hamilton, Executive Director
February 26, 2021

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Beth Hamilton and I am the executive director of The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (The Alliance), the statewide coalition of Connecticut's nine community-based sexual assault crisis services centers. Our mission is to create communities free of sexual violence and to provide culturally affirming trauma-informed advocacy and prevention centered on the voices of survivors. Each year, our coalition provides free and confidential services to more than 8,000 victims and survivors of sexual violence that they cannot get elsewhere. These services, including our statewide crisis hotlines in English and Spanish, are available 24/7, 365 days per year because survivors need services ready to receive them at any time. Due to state and federal funds, these services are free and accessible to all. Without those dollars, we would not be able to support victims and survivors of sexual violence.

I want to specifically draw your attention to the detrimental impact that the continued decrease in Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) dollars has and will have on the state of Connecticut. The VOCA fund was created by Congress in 1984 to provide federal support to state and local victim assistance programs. Funds are generated by fines paid by people who commit federal crimes and have begun to decrease since 2018 based on reduced deposits into the fund due to changes in prosecutorial strategies over time. The Office of Victims Services (OVS) administers VOCA funds in the state of Connecticut and has done an excellent job of strategically managing the fund to ensure that victim services are properly funded; however, as the VOCA fund is further depleted it will become impossible for OVS to meet the current need. While the Biden administration may remedy this in the future, additional support in our state budget for victim services will ensure that services remain intact without interruption.

VOCA funds ensure that victims of sexual violence and other crimes are able to have access to support, counseling, advocacy and help with navigating the complex criminal justice system. These funds also provide critical training, technical assistance and opportunities for cross-system collaborations that are vital to creating coordinated systems of care for victims and survivors. With the VOCA fund's current trajectory, there will be a significant loss of funding for The Alliance and other service providers in our state. As organizations like ours continue to see an increase in victims and survivors reaching out for services while simultaneously dealing with the loss of funds due to COVID-19, the decrease in VOCA funds without additional state support will create a dire situation for victims of

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Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence Member Centers



crime in our state. I urge you to consider providing support for victim services in our state budget to bolster the resources needed to help victims of crime move towards wellness and restoration.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Beth Hamilton
Executive Director
Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence
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