

## MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

### STABILIZE THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WORKFORCE BY INCLUDING DV ADVOCATES IN COST-OF-LIVING SALARY ADJUSTMENTS

A.8437A Hevesi/S.7793A Persaud

The New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) urges the New York State Legislature to pass legislation that will stabilize the DV sector's diminishing workforce by giving all staff at OCFS-licensed nonprofit DV programs a cost-of-living salary adjustment (COLA).

New York State relies on nonprofit DV agencies to provide critical services to families experiencing domestic violence. The work can be grueling and traumatic. DV advocates meet DV survivors where they are – at the police station, in court, in a medical facility – to provide critical, life-stabilizing services. Their work is challenging and requires specialized preparation and training.

Providing DV services comes at a cost, and it is incumbent upon New York State to value the work of DV programs and fully pay for it. **Nevertheless, DV advocates have been excluded from every budgetary initiative intended to raise wages for human service workers.** The initial COLA statute passed in 2006. Several human service providers that contract with the State, and who provide similar services to domestic violence advocates, were included in that legislation. DV service providers were not included at that time and have never received a COLA on their state contracts. The 2006 statute has never been amended to expand the group of state-contracted human services eligible to receive a COLA. Adding a 4% COLA on OCFS contracts with DV providers is estimated to cost \$1.45 million.<sup>1</sup>

Failure to include DV advocates in the COLA has had a disastrous impact on DV programs' ability to retain and recruit employees. According to a 2022 survey conducted by NYSCADV and the New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NYSCASA) of DV and sexual assault programs across the state<sup>2</sup>, 90% of respondents reported experiencing staff turnover in 2021. In total, respondents reported 547 voluntary staff departures in 2020 and 645 voluntary staff departures in 2021. Numerous positions still remain vacant across the sector.

This is unsustainable. DV service providers cannot meet the demand for services with fewer staff. We are already seeing the impacts in the field. On one day in September 2023, there were more than 10,000 requests for DV services - a 60% increase from five years ago. Worse, on that same day, 1,045 DV survivors sought services but couldn't get the help they requested due to lack of funding and resources.<sup>3</sup>

A8437A/S7793A would:

- Ensure staff at residential and non-residential domestic violence programs that are funded, licensed or certified by the state Office of Children and Families receive a COLA when one is provided to other human services workers contracted with the State;

---

<sup>1</sup> Assumes the value of OCFS' non-FVPSA contracts with DV residential and non-residential providers equals \$28.275 million (or 43.5% of OCFS' Aid to Localities budget for adult protective and DV services).

<sup>2</sup> New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence and New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault. Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Programs Salary and Benefits Survey. October 3, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> National Network to End Domestic Violence, 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Domestic Violence Counts Report. Washington, DC. (2024). Retrieved from: [NNEDV.org/DVCounts](http://NNEDV.org/DVCounts)

- Ensure staff at programs that are funded, licensed or certified by the state Office of Victim Services to provide victim services receive a COLA when one is provided to other human services workers contracted with the State;
- Ensure all human services programs that provide services to individuals for the purpose of improving or enhancing their health and/or welfare, by addressing social problems, receive a COLA when one is provided to other human services workers contracted with the State;
- Provide a 4% COLA to all eligible programs and services designated to receive a COLA; and,
- Require state agencies to conduct a five-year lookback to ensure that any uncovered program is included in future COLAs.

The Legislature must right this wrong and include DV service providers and OVS-contracted victim service providers into the pool of human services workers that receive the COLA. We urge the Legislature to support A8437A/S7793A, which would demonstrate that New York values the DV workforce and the services they provide.

**ABOUT NYSCADV:**

Established in 1978, NYSCADV is designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the information clearinghouse, primary point of contact, and resource center on domestic violence for the State of New York. NYSCADV is responsible for supporting the development of policies, protocol, and procedures to enhance domestic violence intervention and prevention and also provides education and technical assistance to the network of primary-purpose domestic violence service providers statewide.

**For more information, contact: Joan Gerhardt, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy,  
jgerhardt@nyscadv.org**

Revised: March 21, 2024