

## MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

### Expand Access to Victim Compensation Funds

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The New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) strongly supports the immediate passage of legislation that expands access to victim compensation funding.

Financial compensation in the aftermath of a crime gives victims of domestic violence and their families increased stability by covering costs such as hospital bills, mental health counseling, lock replacement, installation of security systems, or replacement of personal property. In New York State, to be eligible for such funding, victims must report their harm to law enforcement within one year of the crime occurring. However, for a variety of reasons, including fear of retaliation or blame, stigma, shame, or mistrust in law enforcement, victims may wait to report or even choose not to report a crime to law enforcement. Limiting access to crime victim funding to victims who are comfortable interacting with law enforcement further disenfranchises victims and perpetuates inequality in a system created to help, not harm, them.

Law enforcement intervention can be lifesaving for some victims of domestic violence. For others, law enforcement involvement significantly elevates risk and severity of harm. A 2015 survey conducted by the National Domestic Violence Hotline revealed that, of respondents who chose not to contact law enforcement, 70% were afraid that calling the police would make things worse, be ineffective, or have significant negative consequences for them or their children.<sup>1</sup> Immediately following law enforcement intervention is one of the most dangerous times for victims of domestic violence. In addition to this heightened period of danger, victims from marginalized communities must take into consideration their safety when reporting to a system permeated by racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and other forms of oppression, and further compounded by decades of systemic violence.

New York's current eligibility requirements for victim compensation funds leave far too many New Yorkers without the financial support they deserve. Now is the time to envision an equitable reimbursement system for all victims of crime. Removing mandatory law enforcement reporting, expanding acceptable forms of documentation victims can provide to prove a qualifying crime occurred, and lengthening the timeframe victims can report a crime from one year to three years significantly reduces current barriers to critical victim compensation funds.

NYSCADV urges the Legislature to make New York's victim compensation program more equitable and accessible to all victims of crime by passing this legislation.

#### 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, 518.482.5465**

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1. Logan, T., & Valente, R. (2015). *Who Will Help Me? Domestic Violence Survivors Speak Out About Law Enforcement Responses*. <https://www.thehotline.org/wp-content/uploads/media/2020/09/NDVH-2015-Law-Enforcement-Survey-Report-2.pdf>