

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
COMMERCE
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

October 26, 2023

Attorney General Merrick Garland
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Garland:

I write to express my concern regarding the steep decline in Victims of Crime Act funding that the State of Wisconsin is expected to experience in fiscal year 2024 and to ask for your assistance in identifying additional, sustainable sources of revenue for the Crime Victims Fund (CVF). Organizations across Wisconsin rely on this funding to provide support to victims of crime, including victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Sadly, Wisconsin continues to suffer from an epidemic of domestic violence, and these funds are vital to assist the adults and children harmed by these crimes. The Department must do everything in its power to ensure that these organizations and the victims they serve have the resources they need.

In 2022, Wisconsin experienced the largest increase in domestic violence deaths in two decades – setting a disturbing new record for the state.¹ The tragic toll of this crime coincides with a deeply concerning reduction in funding from the CVF to states. The Wisconsin Department of Justice has projected that its Fiscal Year 2024 victim assistance CVF award will be nearly \$10 million less than its Fiscal Year 2023 award, a 41% reduction in funding that will harm organizations, communities, and families across the state.² The End Domestic Violence Wisconsin’s Homicide Report 2022 states plainly this stark reality: “there is not enough funding to meet the basic needs of domestic violence and sexual assault survivors in Wisconsin,”³ and the same is true of all adult and child victims of crime across the state.

While I am proud that the “deposits fix,” enacted as part of the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021 and first identified in my Edith Shorougian Senior Victims of Fraud Compensation Act, has directed an additional \$1 billion in revenue to the CVF between 2021-

¹ End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin Homicide Report 2022, available at: <https://edaw-webinars.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/16123358/2022-Wisconsin-Domestic-Violence-Homicide-Report.pdf>.

² See Wisconsin Department of Justice, September 2023 VOCA Funding Update, available at: https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/WIDOJ/2023/09/27/file_attachments/2628459/VOCA%20Funding%20Update%209.2023_Slide%20Deck.pdf.

³ End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin Homicide Report 2022, *supra* note 1, at at 63.

2023,⁴ more is needed to ensure that the fund can meet the needs of Wisconsin crime victims. To that end, I request your assistance to further stabilize the fund and identify additional sources of revenue that could appropriately help to grow its balance.

I urge the Department to continue advising its litigators of the availability of the CVF as a repository for fines, fees, and other penalties to ensure that the Department understands how its work affects the CVF. I additionally urge the Department to provide more visibility regarding deposits into the fund. The lack of predictability relating to proceeds makes it difficult for Congress and states to plan without greater insight into potential future revenue to the CVF. To create more transparency, the Department should implement a system to track payments from successfully concluded cases that may result in deposits into the CVF. Lastly, I urge the Department to work with me and others in Congress to identify other long-term solutions to direct additional funds into the CVF. Successful prosecutions can both hold wrongdoers accountable and result in deposits to the CVF. I urge the Department to keep the important implications of its work in mind and partner with Congress to identify sustainable funding sources to support victims of crime.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

⁴ Department of Justice, FY 2007 – FY 2023 Crime Victims Fund Annual Receipts (\$ Millions) (as of 09/30/2023), available at: <https://ovc.ojp.gov/about/crime-victims-fund/fy-2007-2023-cvf-annual-receipts.pdf>.