October, 2022

Re: Critical Investments to Prevent and End Domestic and Sexual Violence

Dear State Leaders,

On behalf of more than 35 organizations working to end domestic and sexual violence, we write to request $50 million from the general fund to prevent and end cycles of domestic and sexual violence.

As incidents of patriarchal violence continue to dominate news headlines, residents and leaders are calling for state leaders to invest in preventing future violence.

Through this budget ask, California can:
- Prevent violence by engaging youth and community around safe and healthy relationships;
- Provide spaces where survivors can access culturally-specific healing;
- Engage men–and people of all genders–through nonviolence programs that are innovative, healing-centered, and holistic;
- Stabilize funding for domestic and sexual violence organizations by eliminating reliance on an inequitable fee; and
- Create a cohesive, coordinated, statewide approach to ending cycles of violence

Domestic and sexual violence are not inevitable and can be prevented with long-term initiatives that educate and equip Californians to change unacceptable social and gender norms and systems that perpetuate violence. But without ongoing funding to resource communities to offer holistic prevention and intervention services, cycles of violence will persist throughout the state.

California has the chance to be a leader in violence prevention with a commitment to ongoing funding.

The total funding request for $50 million would support the following actions:
1. **Invest $20 million in ongoing funding for domestic & sexual violence prevention grants to be administered by the Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES).**

The FY 21-22 state budget included $15 million in one-time funding for this purpose, and the FY 18-19 and FY 19-20 budgets included $10 million and $5 million respectively. Cal OES has administered these funds primarily as competitive grant programs, with the exception of augmenting the rape crisis centers in FY 18-19 to support their prevention work.

It is time for the state to commit to ongoing funding to stop future incidences of violence and reduce the costs of sexual and domestic violence to victims, and our communities. Prevention works by teaching safe and healthy relationship skills to school-age youth, improving school climates and safety with peer-led programs, shifting culture by engaging boys and men in gender equity, and promoting racial justice with culturally responsive solutions. Changing the conditions and norms that allow sexual and domestic violence to occur will take time. Thriving communities and healthy relationships can prevail over sexual and domestic violence if we sustain these efforts. With a per-project grant award of $150,000 per year, this request could fund approximately 130 community-based prevention programs, truly allowing prevention to reach across California.

2. **Invest $22M to support innovative interventions and culturally rooted and approaches to end domestic and sexual violence, to be administered by California Department of Social Services**

   a. Through this fund, the state can support nonviolence programs for people seeking support in healthy relationships, with programs that are tailored for men, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA community, and culturally rooted programs. Additionally, these programs can support people with other barriers to health and safety they may be experiencing, including economic stability, education, substance use, and mental health needs.

   b. Separately, allocate funding for DSS to administer funding for culturally-responsive and culturally-specific victim service providers (including non-shelter based programs), to meet the needs of historically marginalized communities.

   c. Funding to pilot programs and expand capacity of existing community-based organizations that support domestic violence survivors and people who have used violence, to create restorative and transformative justice programs and helplines for men, and people of all genders, who are at risk of causing harm in their homes, relationships, and/or communities.

3. **Remove the criminal fee associated with domestic violence convictions** ([PC 1203.097(a)(5)](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codeshortterm.xhtml?sectionid=1203.097&division=12&part=all&subsection=(a)(5))) **and provide impacted essential services with stable, ongoing, and independent resources from the General Fund, and eliminate the Rape Crisis grant program’s reliance on the state penalty fund and instead fund these grant programs**
through the general fund. Currently, critical domestic and sexual violence services are funded through criminal administrative fees that are disproportionately assessed on low-income people and people of color and leave essential survivor services with unpredictable and unstable funding.

a. Currently, \( \frac{2}{3} \) of the domestic violence fee established in PC 1203.097(a)(5) is collected and disbursed at the county level and funds essential emergency shelters. To replace this fund appropriately, provide $3M per year to domestic violence shelter-based programs to support their work with survivors, in addition to the amounts currently provided by the state through General Fund and federal dollars.

b. \( \frac{1}{6} \) of the DV fees referenced above are distributed to the Department of Public Health’s domestic violence prevention programs. As such, we request $1 million per year for the California Department of Public Health’s Domestic Violence Training and Education Fund. This fund supports a public health approach to community-based prevention. Currently, grantees are implementing Close to Home, a promising community mobilization strategy that engages community members to design solutions for domestic and sexual violence prevention.

c. The remainder of the funding from the domestic violence fee is allocated to the Department of Justice’s Restraining Order Reimbursement Fund which reimburses local law enforcement or other criminal justice agencies for state-mandated local costs resulting from the notification requirements in current law. To maintain stability of services, adequate funding should instead be provided through the General Fund or other budget line items.

d. Provide $2M for rape crisis centers
   i. Currently, the state penalty fund contributes $1.71 million per year to the rape crisis center grant and is the primary state funding source for rape crisis centers, with the General Fund only contributing $45,000 per year. To stay consistent to our values of not funding victim services through unstable criminal system fines, the state should instead provide this full amount from the general fund.

4. Invest $2M to establish a senior advisor on violence prevention. California needs a single entity that is empowered to achieve a cohesive statewide strategy for violence prevention and healing, across all departments and agencies. Advocates of the proposal are willing to work with the legislature through the budget process to determine where this position can be housed within. While dozens of state agencies address various aspects of violence prevention and intervention, there is no centralized entity to ensure a whole-of-government response to these pervasive issues and to coordinate activities across all state departments, such as the Department of Public Health, Department of Social Services, Department of Education, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and more. Rather than focusing energy on a government reorganization to combine California’s Victim Compensation Program and the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services Victim Services grant management, this approach would bring together a statewide response to preventing violence. At the national level, we
have seen the positive impact of the first-ever White House Advisor on Violence Against Women during the Obama administration, and the current Gender Policy Council and Senior Advisor on Gender-Based Violence under the Biden administration.

Thank you for considering our request to provide stable and ongoing funding for domestic and sexual violence services and programming.

Sincerely,
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