

In Support of HB186, Victim Services Stabilization

January 31, 2023

House Appropriations Committee

Delaine Smith-Clark

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Center (DVSAC)

Good Afternoon, Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and members of the Committee, I am Delaine Smith-Clark from the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Center (DVSAC) at the UM Capital Region Medical Center in support of HB186. I am in favor of HB 186 this bill will supplement much-needed federal funding and support for victims of crime.

The Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Center is a comprehensive rape crisis center located in Prince George's County. DVSAC is a leading voice on sexual assault and domestic violence as well as human, sex and labor trafficking. Trained volunteers and staff are available 24 hours a day to provide:

- crisis intervention;
- advocacy with medical and court accompaniment;
- short-term counseling;
- information and referrals;
- housing; and
- community education.

Let me direct the committee's attention to the populations that DVSAC serves. We have assisted individuals for 50 years who have been victimized by sexual assault, domestic violence and trafficking from all walks of life without regard to the age of the individual. The VOCA funding will help DVSAC's ongoing efforts to provide direct support and services to adult/children victims of crime. These services would be provided in court, hospital, and office settings.

The federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) allows us to assist victims and survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence, as well as victims and survivors of trafficking, by providing trauma-informed treatment and vital services that victims and survivors require and deserve.

This legislation is urgent, essential, and critically important to DVSAC's continued work with its clients. There have been ongoing issues with VOCA funding, and the grant has been poorly and inconsistently administered. Insufficient VOCA funding and administrative challenges have had adverse effects on DVSAC's program. Our program has been negatively impacted causing us to reduce our services and delay the hiring of staff.

DVSAC's clients require many services. We appreciate the efforts of this committee and the General Assembly to ensure that clients were able to receive services during the pandemic. We genuinely thank you and hope that HB 186 will have favorable reports.