

**SB148****Victim Services Programs - Supplementing Federal Funding and Support (Victim Services Stabilization Act)**

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

January 24, 2023

POSITION: SUPPORT

My name is Andrea Carroll and I am the Director of Behavioral Health Services at Board of Child Care (BCC). We are headquartered and provide services in Baltimore County, but also within Maryland have programs in Anne Arundel, Caroline, St. Mary's, Montgomery, and Washington Counties. I am submitting this written testimony on SB148 Victim Services Programs - Supplementing Federal Funding and Support (Victim Services Stabilization Act) to encourage your support of this bill.

Our organization provides a comprehensive continuum of care throughout the state to meet the behavioral health needs of Maryland's families. BCC's continuum includes: outpatient mental health clinics, school-based treatment, community- and family-based services, and therapeutic residential services, serving hundreds of youth and families across the state each year. BCC has a long history of providing prevention, education, behavioral health, and residential treatment services to at-risk youth and families that have experienced complex trauma, including serving youth and families that have experienced sex and labor trafficking.

Beginning in October 2018, BCC has been granted annual Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) subawards by the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (GOCPYVS) to provide needed care to child, youth, and young adult survivors of human trafficking. With these funds, BCC has served 23 survivors of sex trafficking from across the state in our residential care program since 2019 and 19 survivors of sex trafficking in the Anne Arundel County Regional Navigator Program since 2021. BCC has used VOCA funds in the following ways:

- Funding staff positions that provide services to victims of trafficking
- Meeting basic needs of victims of trafficking: clothing, food, transportation, shelter, toiletries
- Providing specialized therapy services to victims of trafficking, including supplemental services such as animal-assisted therapy and expressive arts therapies that have been shown to be effective with youth who have experienced trauma
- Providing intensive care coordination and case management to victims of trafficking, working with multidisciplinary community partners such as law enforcement and state's attorneys
- Helping victims of trafficking meet housing, educational, and vocational goals

- Adding safety enhancements in the residential units to keep victims of trafficking safe from themselves and others
- Training staff in human trafficking and related evidence-based treatment models to ensure that services provided to trafficked youth are trauma-informed and effective
- Preventing and fostering early identification of human trafficking in the community through training and public awareness activities

Many of the important services outlined above were only possible with the VOCA grant awards provided by the GOCPYVS. Some staff positions, such as the Anne Arundel County Regional Navigator, are fully funded by the grant. Without these funds, the Regional Navigator Program would be unable to operate and the residential program would not be able to offer the same level of specialized services needed to work with this population. When federal VOCA money was insufficient or delayed in the past, victim services providers had to put programs and services on hold awaiting notice of award while the state rushed to find ways to supplement the funds. Passing SB148 would be an essential step to ensure that victim services in Maryland could continue seamlessly by requiring the state budget to supplement federal VOCA money received.

It is important to note that the bill would not require supplemental funds to be included in the state budget every year, but rather only in years when the federal VOCA funds granted to the state do not meet the minimum requirements for victim services in the state to remain operational. On July 22, 2021, President Biden signed into law the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021 (VOCA Fix). This law will address gaps in VOCA funding at the federal level, most notably by requiring that monetary penalties from federal deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements to go into the Crime Victims Fund. It is anticipated that it could take a couple years for the Crime Victims Fund to optimize, but after that time it is believed that federal VOCA funds would return to past levels. The federal VOCA Fix law should significantly reduce any fiscal impact of SB148 in future years.

We urge you to consider passing SB148 Victim Services Programs - Supplementing Federal Funding and Support (Victim Services Stabilization Act) so that organizations like ours can continue to provide needed services to Maryland's children and youth victimized by heinous crimes such as sex and labor trafficking.

Sincerely,



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