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**ATTORNEY GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

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August 13, 2021

The Honorable Ken Weyler, Chairman
Fiscal Committee of the General Court
State House
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

His Excellency, Governor Christopher T. Sununu
and the Honorable Council
State House
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

REQUESTED ACTION

Pursuant to RSA 14:30-a VI, authorize the Department of Justice (DOJ) to accept and expend federal funds in the amount of \$5,000,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF) for the purpose of subgranting funds to existing subgrantees in order to address the increased need for victim services upon the approvals of the Fiscal Committee of the General Court and Governor and Executive Council. 100% Federal Funds.

Funds are to be budgeted in account #02-20-20-201510; Department of Justice, Grants Administration, 24790000 ARPA Grant as follows. All transactions will be accounted for using activity codes, to be determined and assigned by the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery:

<u>Class/Expense</u>	<u>Class Title</u>	<u>SFY 2022 Budget</u>
072-500575	Grants-Federal	\$4,715,000
085-5885XX	Interagency Transfer Out Of Federal Funds	\$285,000
Total		<u>\$5,000,000</u>
<u>Source of Funds</u>		
000-400338	Federal Funds	<u>\$5,000,000</u>

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August 13, 2021
Page 2 of 3

EXPLANATION

The Department of Justice (DOJ) is requesting to accept and expend funds from the Federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF) for purpose of subgranting funds to existing subgrantees in order to address the increased need for victim services.

Federal award funds, for this item, are budgeted to support grant activities as follows:

072-500575-Grants to direct service providers to victims of crime and payment for
administration of the grant.
085-5885XX-Grants to state agencies.

The DOJ subgrants funds, for direct victim services, from the Victims of Crime Act Grant (VOCA). VOCA was enacted by Congress in 1984 and it established the Crime Victims Fund. Fines paid by offenders of federal crimes are deposited into this Fund. Money from the Fund is then distributed to states for the benefit of victims of crime. Due to reduced criminal fines and and penalty deposits into the fund and non-prosecution agreements that divert funds for other purposes, VOCA awards have been reduced dramatically resulting in decreased subgrants to victim service providers.

This reduction has come at a time when victim service providers are experiencing an increase in need. In New Hampshire, for calendar year 2020, calls to domestic violence and sexual assault crisis lines increased by 63% and emergency shelters, for domestic violence victims, increased by 24% in 2020 compared to 2019. The pandemic brought new sets of challenges for victims, who were exposed to more severe cases of violence and abuse, trying to access services and support.

Despite relaxed COVID-19 restrictions, there are indications that the need for victim services will continue to increase. Mandated social isolation, compounded with the fear of getting sick, instantly provided new ways for abusive partners to leverage power and control. Additionally, job loss and financial instability has augmented the impact of economic abuse, which further makes it difficult for survivors to access resources. As COVID-19 has had a severe impact on mental health and substance misuse in our communities, it is important to continue to provide mental health and wellness services. This is especially important for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, who have a higher vulnerability to homelessness, substance abuse, and poverty compared to the general population who have never experienced abuse.¹

¹ Supporting the Most Vulnerable; The New Hampshire Coalition on Domestic and Sexual Violence

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August 13, 2021
Page 3 of 3

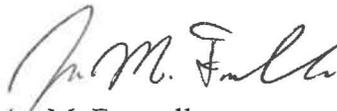
During the pandemic, the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) saw a drastic drop in reports of child abuse and neglect suspicions. During this same time, New Hampshire saw a significant drop in Child Advocacy Center (CAC) referrals from law enforcement and DCYF. The lack of reporting is directly connected to limited personal interactions between children and adults, who would most likely report concerns (teachers, medical/mental health providers and other professionals working with youths).

In 2020, all 11 of New Hampshire's CACs remained open to serve the needs of child victims of abuse and their caregivers. The CACs experienced a 66% increase in referrals for forensic interviews from April through June 2020. There was also a 28% increase in interviews for June 2020 as compared to June 2019². With relaxed restrictions, CASA of NH is anticipating a surge in the number of cases that require a child advocate. In addition, backlogged court cases plus new cases will result in more victims in need of services.

VOCA funds provide subgrants to Child Advocacy Centers, the New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Northern Human Services, Catholic Charities, CASA, New Hampshire Legal Assistance, the Department of Corrections, county advocates and many more vital victim service agencies. ARPA funding is requested to maintain important services to victims of crime. This is an allowable use of ARP FRF funds under Section 602 (c)(1) (C) to respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts.

In the event that Federal Funds become no longer available, General Funds will not be requested to support this program.

Respectfully submitted,



John M. Formella
Attorney General

#3247110

² Annual Impact Report 2020, Granite State Children's Alliance