



State of Rhode Island
Office of the General Treasurer
State House – Room 102
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Seth Magaziner
General Treasurer

July 21, 2020

Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chair, House Committee on Finance
Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance

Re: FY21 budget – Article 3, Section 4 (RIGL 12-19-34 Priority of restitution payments to victims of crime)

Dear Chair Abney,

I am writing in regard to Article 3, Section 4 of the proposed FY21 budget, which impacts funding for the Crime Victim Compensation Program (CVCP), which is administered by our office. CVCP helps Rhode Islanders recover from the financial hardship resulting from being a victim of a violent crime.

The program can provide up to \$25,000 in funding to Rhode Islanders for medical expenses; relocation expenses; funeral and related expenses; crime scene cleaning; and loss of earnings or loss of support. In 2019, CVCP served over 1,200 Rhode Islanders, including 200 children, who were victims of violent crimes. Among those who received assistance were 42 victims of domestic violence who received emergency relocation funding to immediately escape unsafe, life-threatening living situations. Additionally, CVCP provided financial support for mental health counseling for 36 minors who witnessed acts of domestic violence or homicide.

CVCP is funded by both state and federal resources. The primary source of state funding is through court costs charged to an offender. Federal funds come from an annual matching grant from the US Department of Justice, equal to 60% of state funding expended for claim payouts in the previous year. Over the past six years, CVCP has seen a significant decline in revenue collected from the courts, with over \$800,000 available in FY2014 for claims payouts, dropping to \$424,000 in FY2019. This has resulted in an additional annual decline in federal matching funds.

While we appreciate the Administration's attempt to address the funding shortage by diverting additional court costs to fund CVCP, this change was already made in prior years through an agreement between our office and the Courts, and therefore is insufficient to solve the problem. To ensure sufficient funding for CVCP in the coming year, and to continue to provide support to victims of crime, we request a general revenue allocation claims of \$350,000 to support CVCP. If this funding is not allocated this year, the program deficit for next year will be even larger due to a continued decline in federal matching funds.

Without this allocation, there is a strong possibility the program will run out of money mid-year and CVCP will not be able to serve victims fleeing domestic violence or trying to rebuild their lives after surviving a violent crime. This funding saves lives and I hope to work with this Committee to ensure CVCP is funded in the FY21 budget.

Sincerely,

Seth Magaziner
General Treasurer