



east bay community action program
THE BRIDGE to SELF-RELIANCE

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Chair O'Brien
House Finance Committee/Public Safety Subcommittee

Re: FY26 Budget re the Office of Public Safety,

Newport County Headquarters
Jean E. Hicks Center
19 Broadway
Newport, RI 02840
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Dear Chair O'Brien and members of the committee,

Our organization, East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP), has received VOCA funding through the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Justice, which we use to serve 75 clients annually.

This funding has assisted numerous individuals throughout the state of Rhode Island. Below is a written testimony from one of our VOCA Advocates at EBCAP on how this funding changed a client's life.

"We helped her navigate the intake process for the Victim's Services program and successfully connected her with the Crossroads Domestic Violence Shelter. Additionally, our VOCA program assisted her with outstanding rent, ensuring she wouldn't face an eviction on her record, which could have complicated her chances of finding future housing. Crossroads protected this client, who faced danger of being killed. I can't imagine what would have happened if Crossroads hadn't received funding to continue its Safe House program."

We have consistently seen these life-saving funds go down as federal funding wanes. These VOCA dollars are only federal pass-through funds, and Rhode Island currently spends almost no state funds on victims. At the same time, Rhode Island spends approximately \$7,800 per prisoner each year. By allocating just 10% of that amount—about \$750—toward supporting each of the state's 42,000 victims, Rhode Island could commit \$30 million to vital victim services. This bill would do just that -- create a grant pool of \$30 million to fund supporting programming for the victims and survivors we work with each day.

Other states- including our neighboring states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania- make significant investments in their victims, not just their prisoners. We urge you to join those states and add victim funding into the FY26 Public Safety Budget this year.

We at EBCAP would like to thank Chair O'Brien and members of the committee. Your consideration of these matters and solutions is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Carla Veiga Wahnnon
Director, Community Health