



east bay community action program
THE BRIDGE to SELF-RELIANCE

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Chair Abney
House Finance Committee

Re: Support of H5390

Dear Chair Abney and members of the committee,

Our organization, East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP), writes in strong support of Representative Craven's VICTIM Act, H5390 which would ensure that the over 42,000 victims in Rhode Island continue to have access to life saving victim services.

EBCAP provides high-quality, comprehensive and accessible health and human services to ten communities across the state, serving more than 30,000 people in Rhode Island. For seven years we received VOCA funding through the Department of Public Safety, which we use to serve 75-100 survivors of violence 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.

Other states- including our neighboring states of Massachusetts and Connecticut - 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.

Your consideration of these matters and solutions is very much appreciated.

Carla Veiga Wahnnon
Director, Community Health