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Attorney General Merrick Garland
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Garland,

I am dumfounded by your announcement to cut federal funding for Victims of Crime by 41% in a single year.

As Attorney General, I am the state administrator for the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA). When I ran for office in 2018, Ohio was funded at \$117 million. Your announcement will fund Ohio at \$26 million--a 78% drop. Like the rest of the country, Ohio is not experiencing less crime than in 2018.

This funding is the primary financial source for victim services in all 50 states, five U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. These cuts will deeply damage – if not destroy – many of the agencies that are front-line support, and the victims will be left with few or no services.

When a child is molested, they go to a Child Advocacy Center for medical and psychological help. When a woman is raped, she is connected to resources and guided through the perplexing criminal justice system by an advocate from a rape crisis network. When a family suffers a murder, it is a local victim's advocate that brings help after the police clear the scene. All funded through VOCA.

This funding is not gravy for the states or the local communities. It is their lifeblood.

It's important to note that revenue for the fund is generated from offenders convicted of crimes, not from taxes. In 2021, Congress passed the VOCA Fix Act, which allows monetary recoveries from federal deferred prosecutions and non-prosecution agreements to replenish the fund. A similarly creative solution is again needed to prevent a hollowing out of crime victim services. Might I inquire what happened to the payment from First Energy as part of its deferred prosecution agreement? *That one case alone produced more money than you propose for the entire state of Ohio next year.*

You have been hearing from Attorneys General and others for more than a year that this was a critical need in America, and as the leader of the Justice Department, it is your responsibility to be their champion. Thus far, you have failed. At a time when continuing resolutions are the choice of funding for our nation's budget, you should have demanded that – *at minimum* –

current funding levels be maintained. That would meet the definition of a “continuing” funding plan.

This decision, if not reversed, will have grave impact on the states, including the potential loss of support for initiatives that benefit victims of crime, including federal, state, and tribal victim service programs; discretionary grant awards; victim specialists in U.S. Attorney’s Offices and the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and the federal victim notification system.

While funding has abated, the demand for Crime Victims support services have not. In 2023, the Ohio Attorney General’s Office administered VOCA-funded assistance to 326 agencies statewide – domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, child advocacy centers and more – aiding more than 321,000 Ohioans. These programs have received significant cuts in funding from the benchmark allocation in 2018 to Ohio of \$117 million dollars.

These reductions in funding of up to 50% since 2016 have led programs to reduce services, lay off employees and serve less of Ohio’s victims in times of crisis. The additional reduction this year will lead to more cuts and in some cases the closure of victim services.

Without prompt action to support the VOCA Fund, many victim service programs throughout the country may be forced to close, and the victims and survivors those programs serve could be left without services and support, endangering their safety and wellbeing. It took years to build this network and train these human resources.

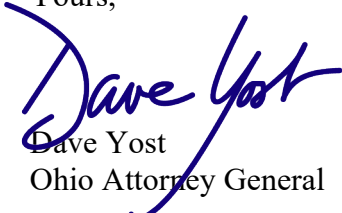
These burdens are likely to fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable victims, including members of marginalized, rural, underserved, or impoverished communities.

Catching the bad guys and locking them up is only half of the justice equation. Caring for the victims of crime is at least equally important.

From your perch in Washington, D.C., these might appear to be paper transactions – they’re just grants. The view from the cities and towns of Ohio and other states is markedly different. This funding is the oxygen that keeps crime-victim service agencies – and those they serve – alive.

Please reconsider your decision and at least fund the states at current levels like everything else in the federal government.

Yours,



Dave Yost
Ohio Attorney General