

TO: Mary Hooper, Chair House Appropriations
FROM: Maxine Grad, Chair, House Judiciary
RE: CCVS BA Request
DATE: 1/12/22

We write to let you know that House Judiciary strongly supports the House Appropriations Committee's work and review of a budget adjustment to fill the shortfall in the Crime Victims' Services budget for FY 22. We support the continuation of services for victims of crime in Vermont. These are important services that should not be stopped and that we understand are in jeopardy due to a revenue shortfall.

Currently, the Center for Crime Victims receives funding from two sources: federal funding (which has been greatly decreased for many years), and state revenue funded from a portion of the proceeds from fines, fees, and restitution. Since the start of COVID-19, several factors contributed to these funds decreasing dramatically. First, there was a major decrease in the number of tickets issued by Vermont local and state law enforcement. Second, the major shut down of Vermont courts also resulted in decreased revenue for the Center. Additionally, in Franklin County, for example, to get the extremely large waiting list of cases for court dates, the Judge dismissed 400 cases. These factors all have had a negative impact on 2022 revenues for Crime Victims' Services. According to the JFO, not much is likely to change that would improve the revenue picture for the rest of FY 22, making this budget adjustment truly critical to ensure victim services can continue. With the strong correlation between COVID and the funding crisis that the Center for Crime Victims Services is facing in FY 22, we state the obvious, which is that we hope that if ARPA funds are appropriate, House Appropriations will look to those funds first. In our discussion, it was of great importance to our committee that we communicate this information to you. Like your committee, we know that General Funds are precious and should be applied in the Budget Adjustment to fill the gap that ARPA cannot legitimately fill. We feel it's so important that at the end of the day, the Center for Crime Victims Services be able to assure survivors that through June 2022, these services will be available.

We also fully understand the importance of a more sustainable funding model being identified as the work begins in crafting the FY 23 budget. As our committee and others work toward policies that reduce criminal justice system involvement for individuals (when appropriate), through the implementation of recommendations by the Justice Re-investment II Working Group and other initiatives, it will be important to consider strategies that decouple support for crime victims, survivors, and their families from penalties and associated fees. House Judiciary has set up an ad hoc subcommittee to look at how we can support the efforts to have a new funding model in place for FY 23. We look forward to meeting with the JFO staff who are charged with the report, as well as with House Appropriations and Crime Victims Services to be part of the solution in developing a sustainable model.

We are available to provide additional information. Thank you for your consideration of this request to assure that victims of crime know we stand with them in their needs for support, information, and assistance.