

FY27 State Budget Testimony
Becky Gonyea, Executive Director
Clarina Howard Nichols Center

Good afternoon. My name is Becky Gonyea. I am the Executive Director at the Clarina Howard Nichols Center. For 45 years, Clarina has been a trusted, community-based resource for survivors of domestic and sexual violence in Lamoille County.

I am here today in strong support of a \$450,000 appropriation to fill the deficit in Vermont's Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund and preserve life-saving services for survivors.

At Clarina, we are a dedicated team of 8 staff and 5 volunteer hotline advocates.

Last year alone, Clarina served 403 individuals including responding to 1,114 hotline calls and providing emergency shelter for 56 individuals (35 adults and 21 children).

Our team remains deeply committed to our mission and the survivors we serve. Yet, each year we're asked to do more with less.

In FY26, Clarina received \$30,321 through the Domestic and Sexual Violence Fund. While modest, these funds are critical. They allow us to continue to offer high quality, trauma informed services at no cost to survivors in Lamoille County. These services include emergency shelter, a 24-hour hotline, legal advocacy, housing navigation, medical accompaniment and sexual assault response, and so much more.

The stark reality is that we cannot sustain these services if the Domestic and Sexual Violence funds are reduced. A reduction in this funding would require our organization to reduce staffing. This would impact services as our team already works tirelessly - nights, weekends, on-call, whenever needed. What would the impact be? Longer response times? Reduced legal advocacy? Maybe a waiting list?- we have never turned anyone away.

Please consider a \$450,000 appropriation to Vermont's Domestic and Sexual Violence Fund, to ensure survivors can access support when they need it most. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and for your consideration.