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TO: Adam Greshin, Commissioner, Department of Finance & Management; Hardy Merrill, Deputy Commissioner; Stephanie Gauvin, Budget & Management Analyst
CC: Jaye Johnson, Esq., General Counsel to Governor Scott and Senior Staff
FROM: Jennifer Poehlmann, J.D., Executive Director, Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services
Carol Brochu, Director of Finance & Administration, Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services
RE: VCCVS Budget Considerations for FY27
DATE: October 23, 2025

Thank you for meeting to discuss the proposed Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services (“Center”) budget for FY27, our needs and requests. We have two specific requests for which we are requesting general funding. If provided, we expect these minor requests will provide some assistance to the Center in meeting its basic statutory obligations as a state agency, established under 13 VSA §5361.

As you know, we continue to struggle to adhere to Vermont mandates as we encounter the reality of declining federal and special funds in order to provide stable, certain and predictable funding for core victim service positions. It should be noted that the January 2025 report of the Treasurer’s Task Force on the Federal Transition, the Center was identified as receiving over 55% of its funding from the federal government, placing it far out of step with every other agency within the criminal justice system and placing it at high risk.

Our Request:

The Center is requesting an increase of 3% to its General Fund base appropriation in the amount of \$49,502.73

The SFY27 budget reveals the essential need to use general funds to support the operating cost for the Center for Crime Victim Services to exist. The increasing cost of personnel and operating costs far exceeds the Center’s ability to build a budget based on projected revenues and thus necessitates some additional level of stable funding and support from the SOV general funds.

While the Center is a state agency, we are not supported in the same way as other State of Vermont agencies. Our employees are not state employees, and the Center does not receive support from ADS, HR and other services. Instead, we are often forced to pay much higher rates, to include Health Care, Liability Insurance, IT Services, etc. SFY27 includes some of these costs in the General Fund budget to help offset the reduction in the Compensation Fund budget. The CCVS General Fund budget includes one FT Grants Manager position that was added in SFY2025 in the amount of \$85,500.00. The estimated cost of this position in SFY2027 is \$106,257.00.

The Center is requesting an additional \$95,854.70 in GF dollars to support its administration of State General Funds to victim services programs.

The Center does not receive any administrative funds (generally 5% of the total grant award) to support the work that we do for grants under the Domestic/Sexual Violence (DHSV) Fund (19 grant awards) totaling \$783,835 or the 20 General Fund grants we administer totaling \$1,270,759. At 5%, the amount of administrative funds would total **\$95,854.70**. Center staff spend a considerable amount of time administering grants, including conducting site visits, providing technical assistance, programmatic and financial reviews and quarterly reporting. This request does not reflect the frequent appropriation of one-time funds for programming, for which the Center also receives no administrative support. Nor does this request reflect the \$137,500 the Center currently administers to supervised visitation programs.

With Center overly dependent upon volatile and declining federal grant funding to support core positions within the agency, the additional general fund dollars are critical to providing stability for staffing.

Total Request: \$145,357.43

The Center is mandated under state statutes to administer both the Victim's Compensation Program and the Restitution Program and Fund, pursuant to 13 VSA §5352(b) and Title 13, Chapters 165 and 167. ***Decreasing funding levels are making it increasingly challenging for the Center to comply with state mandates, and without additional support, we are strongly concerned about the viability of these funds in the near future.***

The Victim Compensation Fund has seen an unprecedented decrease in funding over the past decade. In 2015, revenues into the fund were \$2,087,211.00; in 2025, revenues were \$1,082,193.00, representing a 48% decrease. It should be noted that within the JFO Issue Brief dated February 6, 2022, "Option 1" offered that changes to the surcharge structure would result in projected increased revenues into the Compensation Fund and DHSV Fund in the amount of \$300,000-\$400,000 annually. However, the actual total revenues for SFY24 and SFY25 only increased \$56K to the Compensation Fund and \$80K in the DHSV fund, well below those projections. This has resulted in merely a \$136K increase in two years versus the \$600K-800K that was projected. Without additional support, the Center is forced to make cuts to the Victim Compensation Fund budget by \$250K, from \$1,514,076.00 to \$1,264,076.

It should be noted that the increase in reported crime, particularly homicide cases, has a significant impact on our Fund. Pursuant to state statute, every homicide survivor is entitled to their own Compensation claim, with a cap of \$10,000 for eligible expenses (13 VSA §5351(7)(C)). We must meet these obligations even in the face of declining revenue, further straining the Fund.

The Restitution Fund

While there have been attempts to increase revenue to the Compensation and DHSV Funds through legislative changes to the surcharges, the Restitution Fund has not had any similar

increases to the fines or fees that form its sole revenue stream. The Fund had revenues of \$2,300,970 in SFY2015 and as of SFY2025, revenues were only \$1,671,740.00, representing a 27% decrease in the past decade; concurrently, payments to victims have increased considerably during this time. The cash balance in the fund has been decreasing at an alarming rate, going from \$1.7M in SFY2023 to only \$680K as of September 2025. Without additional support to this Fund, it will no longer be able to meet the statutory obligation under 13 V.S.A §5362 for the purpose of ensuring that crime victims receive restitution when it is ordered by the court. With increased efforts to mitigate the backlog, we anticipate the clearing of these additional cases will have a significant impact on these dwindling funds.

It is worth noting that since 2008, the **Department of Labor has swept funds from the Restitution Fund in an amount totaling \$280,000**. The Center has no knowledge of how these funds are being used, nor is there any warning that this is taking place. We have repeatedly asked for an accounting of how these funds have been spent, as state statute is clear as to the purpose of the funds (13 VSA §5363(a)), but have yet to receive any information.

Supervised Visitation Program Funding:

The Center currently receives an appropriation of \$137,500 in General Funds to support supervised visitation programming in Vermont. The Center first received an appropriation of \$100,000 in 2005 to support these services, which was increased to \$137,500 within the next couple of years. State General Fund dollars have never been increased since that time.

Starting in 2008, the Center began to utilize victims' compensation funds to provide additional support to this programming, totaling over \$2.7M in additional funding above the general fund appropriation. To mitigate threats to the health of the Fund, support from the Compensation Fund was cut by the Center for FY26. The remaining \$137,500 for supervised visitation programs is not something the Center can continue to administer - rather, this oversight more appropriately lies with DCF. We met with and subsequently reached out to DCF on many occasions over the past nine months to establish a clear plan for transfer of these funds and were met with little to no response. To be clear, the Center no longer wants the responsibility of overseeing funding which does not match our mission and for which we do not receive any support.