

NYSCADV's FY'25 Budget Priorities

- 1. Accept the Governor's \$120 million earmark in the ATL Budget for OVS (pages 1019-1020) and the \$14.4 million transfer of general funds into the Criminal Justice Improvement Act (CJIA) (PPGG Part X, page 156) to cover significant cuts to non-profit victim assistance providers.** Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding enables hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers to access services, including shelter, housing, legal services, counseling and more. New York's federal VOCA grant has declined \$121.6 million in the past five years, losing 61% of its value. Prior state appropriations covered only 23% of the shortfall. Without the Governor's funding, catastrophic cuts to victim service providers will ensue, causing many to cut services and leave victims of DV, sexual violence and child abuse with nowhere to turn.
- 2. Stabilize the DV sector's diminishing workforce and infrastructure by including all staff at OCFS-licensed and approved nonprofit DV programs in the group of human services workers that receives cost-of-living salary adjustments.** New York State relies on nonprofit DV agencies to provide critical services to families experiencing domestic violence. The work can be grueling and traumatic and requires specialized trauma-informed training and experience. New York must ensure this essential emergency workforce is paid living wages. But many DV advocates are not. In fact, they have never received a COLA, nor have they received any budgetary initiative intended to raise wages for human service workers. This has had a disastrous impact on the ability of DV programs to retain and recruit employees.
- 3. Accept a \$21 million increase in the set aside for state reimbursement to counties for adult protective services and emergency shelter for DV survivors (ATL Budget for OCFS, pages 333-334).** OCFS data demonstrate that 3,600 more DV survivors and children obtained non-residential services in 2022 than the year before. Requests for residential services have increased as well. In fact, New York State continues to have the highest demand for DV services in the country. Yet state funding for adult protective and domestic violence services has been level funded for at least the last 15 years. We urge the Legislature to accept the Governor's \$21 million increase in this critical appropriation.
- 4. Accept a \$5 million appropriation (ATL Budget for OPDV, page 917) to expand the Survivors Access Financial Empowerment (SAFE) Fund.** Personal safety and economic security are inextricably linked for victims of domestic violence. In fact, for many victims, concerns over their ability to provide financially for themselves and their children are a significant reason for staying in or returning to an abusive relationship. The final FY'24 budget significantly increased the ability of DV survivors to financially stabilize their lives with \$5 million in DV Flexible Funding Assistance, a new program that permits local DV programs to provide direct financial assistance to DV survivors. The FY'25 Executive Budget includes another \$5 million to continue this critical financial empowerment program for DV survivors, albeit now rebranded as the Survivors Access Financial Empowerment (SAVE) Fund. We urge the Legislature to support this initiative so DV survivors and their families can build economic resiliency.
- 5. Accept a \$24.54 million transfer of general funds into the CJIA (PPGG Part X, page 156) to cover an anticipated increase in victim compensation applications following passage of the Fair Access to Victim Compensation legislation (FAVC) (Chapter 695 of the Laws of 2023).** The FAVC law permits crime victims to have victim service providers, rather than law enforcement, support their application for victim compensation. To ensure all eligible crime victims can obtain assistance when needed, the Executive Budget includes a \$38.94 million transfer of general funds to OVS' CJIA, which includes \$24.54 million to implement the new law. NYSCADV urges the Legislature to accept this critical appropriation.

Dated January 24, 2024