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NEW YORK STATE COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

TESTIMONY OF THE NEW YORK STATE COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TO THE JOINT BUDGET HEARING OF THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE AND ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE REGARDING HUMAN SERVICES

**PRESENTED BY CONNIE NEAL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FEBRUARY 9, 2016**

My name is Connie Neal and I am the Executive Director of the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Coalition). On behalf of the Coalition, I want to thank Senator Young, Assemblyman Farrell, and all committee members for the opportunity to convey comments regarding the budget and human services issues as they impact victims of domestic violence in New York.

The New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence is a statewide membership organization of local domestic violence service providers and allied organizations. In New York there are 249 residential and non-residential domestic violence programs across the state, and together we share a commitment to create and support the social change necessary to prevent and end domestic violence¹.

Each year, the National Network to End Domestic Violence coordinates a National Census of Domestic Violence Services. The most recent Census took place on September 16, 2015 and provides a one day unduplicated count of adults and children seeking services from domestic violence programs in all states and the U.S. territories.

Later this month, the National Network to End Domestic Violence will provide a briefing to Congress on the results of the 2015 Census. The information in that briefing will include staggering information about New York State².

According to the Census, New York has the highest demand for domestic violence services in the country.

- On the day of the Census, 6,950 victims of domestic violence received services in New York.
- On that same day, 956 requests for domestic violence services went unmet because of critical funding and staffing shortages.
- Domestic violence programs in New York reported that 148 individual domestic violence service options for survivors were reduced or eliminated during 2015.
- And finally, domestic violence programs reported that 115 staff positions, most of which were direct service advocates, were reduced or eliminated in that same time period.

¹ OCFS Domestic Violence Prevention Act – 2014 Report to the Governor & Legislature Retrieved on February 1, 2016 from <http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/reports/DV%202014%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf>

² National Network to End Domestic Violence (2015) Domestic Violence Counts – DRAFT New York Summary.

This incredible demand for domestic violence services in New York is a call to action for the State of New York. We have the opportunity in front of us to create the strongest domestic violence coalition and network of domestic violence programs in the country. And equally important, to provide a clear message that a meaningful investment in domestic violence services and primary prevention is a top priority for public protection in our state.

REQUEST FOR SUPPORT FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES AND PRIMARY PREVENTION

Sadly, the New York State Executive Budget contains little state originating funding to support domestic violence services, and relies heavily on federal funding sources. Clearly that federal funding is not enough.

Lessons from an August 2014 report entitled “Domestic Abuse Grant Programs and Practices in Nine States”³ indicates the following:

“...It is important to ensure that emergency services are stable and available for victims throughout a state. Victims, their communities, and states are best served by the presence of a network of local programs whose sole purpose is to ensure that services and support for victims and their children exist, and that gaps and needs are identified and met. Frequently, this includes the need for victims to flee their homes and communities in order to remain safe. It is difficult to achieve these goals when programs are competing with one another for limited funds, are constantly facing the threat of losing funding and grant administrators view local programs as vendors instead of as experts that offer comprehensive solutions to a serious social problem.” (Lauby, 2014)

Today, we are asking that you ensure the following items are prioritized in the final budget:

1) Address long standing gaps in funding for local domestic violence programs across the state as a result of years of flat or reduced investments by:

- **Providing \$6 million in TANF funding for non-residential domestic violence services; and**
- **Providing at least a 3% increase in the domestic violence shelter per diem rate.**

2) Stabilize and increase civil legal services funding for domestic violence victims statewide.

I ask the legislature to ensure that there is a specific and stable line dedicated to civil legal services for domestic violence victims, and that the distribution of such funding be done in a way that ensures services in each county are adequately funded. Full support from last year’s budget must be restored and increased in order to address the high demand for civil legal services by survivors of domestic violence.

3) Provide \$4.5 million in funding for local domestic violence programs to collaborate with colleges and universities in implementing the recent Enough Is Enough campus policy mandates for dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking services. This support for domestic violence programs is intended to compliment the \$4.5 million already provided in support for rape crisis programs and their work to prevent

³Lauby, Mary R. 2014. Domestic Abuse Grant Programs and Practices in Nine States.

sexual assault. Groundbreaking legislation was passed during the last legislative session, and I encourage you to provide funding for domestic violence programs so that they can adequately support this legislation by addressing dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking in conjunction with colleges and universities across the state.

4) Create a primary prevention funding stream for domestic violence programs in New York by establishing a \$17.25 million fund in the budget that will be dispersed through coordinated support to the Coalition and local domestic violence programs statewide. The consequences and costs of domestic violence homicides can be devastating not only for the victims and their families, but also for neighborhoods and communities in which the murders occur. The average cost per homicide can exceed \$17.25 million when considering medical care costs, lost future earnings, public program costs, property damage and losses, and quality of life losses.⁴

Innovations in the work to end domestic violence “have come largely from states with reliable, non-competitive funding practices and strong state coalitions. Furthermore, it is observable that constant changes to funding levels and cuts to agencies have a deleterious effect on the ability of programs to meet the needs of victims.”⁵

Primary prevention goes beyond raising awareness of domestic violence and works to promote the behaviors we want to see adopted in communities across our state. This is a relatively new concept for many working to end domestic violence, whose main focus has been responding to victim needs. However, it is clear that we must increasingly focus our efforts on stopping potential perpetrators before they commit their first act. This includes promoting social change through activities, programs, and policies that change the attitudes, behaviors and social norms that allow domestic violence to thrive.

Again, because the cost of a single homicide can be well over \$17.25 million - we are requesting funds at this level to demonstrate New York State’s commitment to preventing the far-reaching tragedies of domestic violence homicides in the coming years⁶.

CONCLUSION

New York State has a long and storied history as a national leader. However, we should not be the #1 state in the country regarding demand for domestic violence services.

Now is precisely the time to affirm our collective commitment to ending domestic violence by increasing investments in these vital programs. It is time for New York State to become the national model for prevention and response services in the country. We ask that you work with your fellow legislators (including those who are coordinating the public protection budget process) and the governor to ensure no survivor of domestic violence is ever turned away from the services they seek, and that New York State meaningfully invests in primary prevention so that we can stem the tide of domestic violence once and for all.

I look forward to working with you to create and sustain the strongest statewide domestic violence coalition, network of domestic violence services, and primary prevention initiatives in the country, and want to thank you again for the opportunity to present this testimony.

⁴ Delisi, Kosloski, Sween, et. al. 2010. Murder by Numbers: Monetary Costs Imposed by a Sample of Homicide Offenders. The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology. 21(4). P 501-503.

⁵ Lauby, Mary R. 2014. Domestic Abuse Grant Programs and Practices in Nine States.

⁶ Delisi, Kosloski, Sween, et. al. 2010. Murder by Numbers: Monetary Costs Imposed by a Sample of Homicide Offenders. The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology. 21(4). P 501-503.