

Testimony of Urban Resource Institute before the 2024 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Public Protection

January 25, 2024

Urban Resource Institute (URI) is grateful for the opportunity to present testimony before the 2024 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Public Protection.

URI is the largest provider of domestic violence shelter services in the country, in addition to being a leading provider of transitional housing to families experiencing homelessness. URI provides temporary housing to more than 2,600 people on any given night in one of our 26 shelters in four of the five boroughs and we serve 40,000 people each year.

URI is committed to ending cycles of violence and homelessness by providing trauma-informed and client-centered support to the families in our care. In addition to transitional housing, URI helps families to achieve economic wellness, we work with youth and in communities to interrupt cycles of violence and we are committed to engaging people who have caused harm in the solutions to end that violence.

Like our partners in the space, URI is grateful to the Executive for including \$120 million in funding over three years for crime victims' services providers in the proposed 2025 New York State Budget to close the gap created by a reduction in federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding due to the state. In addition to closing the VOCA gap, the proposed Executive budget also included an additional \$40 million, which would flow through the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to support the work of local law enforcement and district attorneys related to domestic violence enforcement.

Domestic violence homicides have surged in the one-year period between 2021-2022. According to the [2024 New York City Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee](#), despite a decrease in other violent crimes, intimate partner homicides have increased 29% citywide, with Brooklyn and the Bronx experiencing the largest increases, at 225% and 57% respectively. Additionally, [a recent report](#) by the New York State Comptroller showed that domestic violence incidents have increased statewide.

The racial disparities are stark: Black and Hispanic women are disproportionately impacted by domestic violence. [Black women, just 13% of the population, accounted for 31.2% of homicides, and Hispanic women, comprising 14.6% of the city, constituted 27.3% of intimate partner homicides.](#)

In light of the significant increases in domestic violence statewide, particularly among women in already marginalized communities, URI is grateful that the state has elevated the issue and allocated funding to help support victims of crime and their families as they work to heal. It is vital that the New **[Transforming the lives of domestic violence survivors and homeless families.](#)**

York State Legislature do all that it can to maintain this funding in the final 2025 New York State Budget. Without funding from the State to close the gap, the reduction in VOCA funding from the federal government would be disastrous for the organizations, like URI, that provide supportive services to victims of crime.

While federal funding which has historically supported the domestic violence and broader victims' services sector has decreased, the sector also has serious concerns about potential funding cuts via the 2025 New York City budget process.

While the infusion of an additional approximately \$40 million to support law enforcement activities related to domestic violence was desperately needed and greatly appreciated, it is important to recognize that we will not arrest our way to an end to domestic violence.

As we invest in law enforcement activities related to domestic violence, we must also invest in upstream, community-based solutions that are rooted in equity, such as youth violence prevention and healthy relationship education and trauma-informed accountability programming. At the same time, we must also continue to expand access to safe and stable temporary and permanent affordable and supportive housing and survivor-centered solutions that support a family's healing journey, like economic empowerment, workforce development and legal advocacy, to name just a few.

Research shows that violent behavior begins as early as age 8, and that youth who witness violence are more likely to experience it later on in life as an adult victim or perpetrator. Making school- and community-based healthy relationship programming, such as URI's Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP) and Early RAPP, more accessible, particularly in at-risk communities, has the potential to stop violence before it starts.

Nearly 100% of all survivors of domestic violence have reported that they have experienced economic abuse. The majority of those survivors cite economic abuse as among the primary reasons that they stay in or return to an abusive situation. Investing in economic empowerment and workforce development services for survivors and their families will address one of the major obstacles that prevent survivors from leaving.

URI has requested \$300,000 in funding to be included in the final 2025 New York State budget to support the work of our Economic Empowerment Program (EEP). After participating in EEP, 80% of all participants are above the federal poverty line. In FY 2023, EEP participants earned nearly \$40,000 at job placement. 98% of people who participated in EEP's group programming found employment; 85% of all job ready participants were employed. URI respectfully requests that the Legislature advocate for the inclusion of this vital funding in their respective one-house budget proposals.

While URI provides comprehensive trauma-informed services to survivors of domestic violence and their families to help them heal, we recognize that we must include whole families and communities in the work to end violence. To that end, URI provides trauma-informed accountability programming to those who have caused harm through URI's [Abusive Partner intervention Program \(APIP\)](#).

URI's APIP is a clinical intervention that screens for adverse childhood experiences, encourages non-violent conflict resolution, teaches healthy relationship skills, and links participants to wrap-around services, such as housing and benefits assistance, legal and employment support, computer and cell phone access, and clinical counseling, if indicated.

With the proper services and support, all people are capable of change, and URI has found that many people who cause harm have been exposed to violence or have experienced significant trauma in some way. While everyone is responsible and must be held accountable for their behavior, providing those who have caused harm with access to evidence-based supportive services can help end the cycles that fuel intergenerational violence.

URI along with many of its partners, supports expanding access to transitional housing for survivors of violence who do not have children. Historically, domestic violence shelters were built to accommodate families with children, and most rooms in the system are configured for double occupancy, meaning one adult and one child. Providers of temporary housing for domestic violence survivors are reimbursed by the State for providing shelter services on a per-person-per-night or "head in a bed" basis.

As a result of the current reimbursement structure, providers like URI face a significant financial penalty if they decide to place an adult survivor without children in a room designed for families: they stand to lose \$21,000 per double-bed used for a single. Shelter-providing organizations that see the need to house singles are often not able to do so due to already tight budgets that would not allow for this type of significant financial impact.

The need for space for adult survivors without children has never been higher. In 2021, 48% of the calls came from single adults in need of shelter. Of those, only 31% were placed in shelter, compared to 76% of clients with one child and 78% of clients with two children. 2022 was worse: while 49% of all requests for shelter came from single adults, they accounted for less than a quarter (or 24%) of all shelter placements. There are only around 111 allocated single space shelter beds out of the 23,000 beds available in the domestic violence shelter system.

Bill **A.2583/S.15** would help adult survivors of violence without children, such as LGBTQ+ survivors, older adult survivors, survivors of trafficking and single survivors with pets, obtain access to domestic violence shelter, by adding flexibility to the reimbursement structure. URI supports this legislation and respectfully respects that it be considered for inclusion in the final 2025 New York State budget.

Transforming the lives of domestic violence survivors and homeless families.

URI is pleased that New York State is shining a bright light on domestic violence and investing significant resources to close the gap left by cuts to federal funding. We believe that with additional targeted investments in marginalized communities and at-risk families and individuals, with a focus on prevention, intervention and economic empowerment and workforce development, together we can make New York safer and more equitable for everyone.

Thank you.



URINYC[®]
Urban Resource Institute

205 East 42nd Street, 13th Floor
New York, New York 10017
P 646.588.0030
urinyc.org

Transforming the lives of domestic violence survivors and homeless families.