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Hundreds of crime victim advocates rallied with legislators to demand stable funding for lifesaving services.

Federal funds expected to drop 44.7%, affecting domestic and sexual violence, human trafficking and child abuse survivors.

SACRAMENTO, CA — Last week, over 200 survivors and advocates from across California rallied at the State Capitol to protect funding critical to supporting the crime survivors, along with Assemblymember Eloise Gómez Reyes, Assemblymember Blanca Rubio, Assemblymember Mike Gipson, and Senator Susan Rubio. The survivors and advocates represented 70 organizations that serve and support hundreds of thousands people who experienced domestic and sexual violence, child abuse, human trafficking, and other crimes in California.

Each of these anti-violence programs are recipients of the federal [Victim of Crimes Act \(VOCA\) fund](#), which has declined significantly over the years, resulting in a \$700+ million shortfall to all crime victim services. In California, two bills, [AB 1956](#) and [AB 2432](#), and a [\\$200 million budget ask](#) have been introduced, in order to alleviate the projected **44.7% loss in VOCA funds to the state**. This means that the organizations serving these survivors can expect deep losses in their overall funding for FY 2024, compared to what they received in FY 2023.

These cuts will dramatically reduce the capacity for crime survivors to receive the services they need to escape violence, stay safe, and move toward healing. VOCA funds are used to staff 24/7 crisis hotlines, support domestic violence shelters and housing, and to provide counseling, medical exams, legal services, and [more](#).

“Let me be clear, Partners Against Violence’s services and those of the 400 victim service providers across the state of California are essential and lifesaving. What happens when we are no longer there to answer?” posits **Michelle Cates, Executive Director of Partners Against Violence**. Without funding, she predicts closing a satellite office of her organization that serves Victorville, an area with few resources and significant barriers to accessing them. Michelle stresses that, “Victims in this area already have to travel nearly three hours in the immediate

aftermath of a sexual assault just to receive the medical forensic care they deserve. Closing this office will not only further the distance survivors face accessing lifesaving services, but it will likely end the road to recovery and support altogether.”

Colsaria Henderson, Board President, California Partnership to End Domestic Violence and Executive Director, Next Door Solutions emphasizes, “Every dollar that is lost here is potentially a life, a voice, a person that is not heard and is not supported. These cuts will ripple through our community, leaving survivors with nowhere to turn. It’s not just about numbers on a balance sheet. These are lives, these are people that call for help in the darkest hours.”

Assemblymember Reyes (D-San Bernardino), who is not only championing the [\\$200 million budget ask](#) aiming to backfill the lost funding for crime victim services, but also co-authoring [AB 1956](#) and [AB 2432](#), declared, “We cannot allow the federal government to dictate how we take care of our victims. We cannot balance our budget on the backs of victims!...I know that our budget is a representation of our values, and our values have to include the protection of all of our victims.” “It is our responsibility, it is our moral obligation to support survivors,” echoed **Assemblymember Gipson (D-Carson)**, who is a co-author on AB 1956.

Assemblymember Rubio (D-Baldwin Park) reinforced how important crime victim services are not only to survivors, but their families as well, “When we talk about domestic violence victims or crime survivors, we tend to think it’s just one person — it isn’t. It’s all the families that are affected by these crimes...Maintaining adequate funding for these programs ensures that survivors across the state have access to timely and appropriate resources.” Assemblymember Rubio knows first-hand how violence affects families, as her sister Senator Rubio, has been vocal about her experience as a survivor of domestic violence herself. **Senator Rubio (D-West Covina)** added, “The reality is that is generational trauma that comes out of these assaults...We need to stop that cycle, and the only way that we stop a cycle of abuse or trauma is with funding.” Both Senator Rubio and Assemblymember Rubio are supporters of Assemblymember Reyes’ bills and budget ask.

During the rally, a crowd of 82 survivors and advocates stood behind the podium holding signs that read, “Put survivors first! Protect Crime Victim Services.” This group was proportional to the 816,000 survivors of crime who service providers supported in 2022.

As the rally came to a close, the 82 advocates flipped their signs to reveal that 36 of them were crossed out in red. **Paul Castro, Interim Executive Director of the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence**, addressed what this demonstration represented, “To our state legislature, Governor Newsom, and others watching and listening, look at these signs. These 36 signs in red represent the 365,000 survivors who will be turned away next year. If we gathered all of those survivors in one place, their combined numbers would make that the tenth-largest city in the state of California — larger than Anaheim, Stockton, or Riverside. We are calling on you to take care of your community. We must invest \$200 million in this year’s budget, so survivors don’t have to feel the impacts of these funding cuts.”

On an ending note, **Sandra Henriquez, CEO of VALOR**, emphasized that this funding is critical: “Our budget ask is not an exaggeration, it’s a lifesaving, essential demand that will directly benefit survivors of crime.”

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The California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (the Partnership) works to prevent and end domestic violence in California by mobilizing over 1,000 survivors, advocates, organizations, and allies. Via public policy, prevention, communications, and community-based strategic engagement, we strive to build healthy relationships at all levels by eliminating the injustices which perpetuate cycles of violence, elevating and expanding opportunities for innovative solutions that center survivors, and building and funding support for local programs. For more information, visit cpedv.org.

ValorUS® (VALOR) is a California-based, national anti-sexual violence organization and California's sexual assault coalition, representing the 84 rape crisis center programs across the state. Since our founding in 1980, we have continued to build dynamic relationships across a diverse range of communities, institutions and systems, and mobilize our network of survivors and advocates to influence change. Through advancing equity, leadership, prevention, and advocacy, we are fearlessly pursuing a world free from violence where the dignity of every person is valued and respected. For more information, visit valor.us.

The California VOCA Advocacy Alliance consists of statewide organizations dedicated to supporting survivors of crime, advocates, and their communities. Our large coalition represents over 400 programs across the state, and works to advance the rights of survivors of trafficking, child abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, and others. With a common goal to fearlessly advocate for our communities, we center equitable access to victim services in our decisions. For more information, visit cpedv.org/voca-funding-advocacy.