

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Pam Bondi
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20530

Dear Secretary Kennedy and Attorney General Bondi,

We write to express significant concern regarding current and future disruptions in funding to programs within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Department of Justice (DOJ) that Congress tasked with providing services to victims of crime and survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Cuts to victim services directly threaten the safety and well-being of Arizonans in need, undermining public safety and the integrity of our justice system. We urge you to immediately reverse new policies that are causing funding delays to providers, restore grants supporting victim services that have been terminated, and work to improve these critical programs, not reduce or eliminate their reach.

More than 10 million Americans experience domestic violence every year. According to the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, nearly 1 in 3 women will experience severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.¹ Each year, tens of thousands of Arizonans seek protection, shelter, and support services to escape abuse and rebuild their lives. In 2023 alone, Arizona's victim service providers assisted over 50,000 survivors of domestic violence and other crimes;² today, our state's shelters receive approximately 25 calls for every one available bed.

With current limitations on service programs and ability to communicate with HHS staff, the ability for Arizona service providers to effectively assist survivors has already been diminished. Organizations providing critical services to domestic violence survivors report that funding delays due to HHS's "Defend the Spend" initiative have created unnecessary cash flow issues, straining providers to the point where some have had to pause providing assistance like emergency rent and utility payments to survivors in safe houses. Disruptions like these mean uncertainty for survivors, creating significant barriers to their ability to heal and recover.

¹ <https://acesdv.org/domestic-violence/>

² https://des.az.gov/sites/default/files/dl/Domestic_Violence_Shelter_Fund_Report_2023.pdf

Providers' inability to make payroll means Arizonans in need of help will be left without services.

On April 22, 2025, DOJ's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) notified hundreds of grant recipients across the country that their funding had been terminated, effective immediately. This abrupt termination has created an uncertain future for victim service programs that rely on federal grants to provide life-saving support to survivors of crime. In Arizona, the consequences will be significant. The Arizona Criminal Justice Commission (ACJC), which plays a central role in coordinating statewide victim services, depends on training and technical assistance provided by the National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA) and a variety of OJP funding programs. ACJC has now lost this expertise. In rural Graham County, Arizona, the County Attorney's office will now face additional obstacles to access law enforcement training to investigate and prosecute hate crimes as a result of their grant termination. Across our state, crime victims' access to resources, services, and legal assistance will be diminished as Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) support contracts have been abruptly terminated.

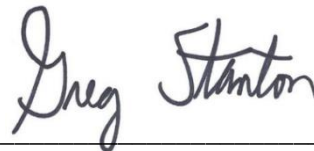
On February 6, 2025, the DOJ's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) paused Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) for its programs, which means funds that help victims of domestic violence are being held with no evident plan for those funds. As you know, OVW has always been an extremely lean operation with specific staff expertise that allows for effective and efficient grantmaking. We appreciate the issuance of updated NOFOs earlier this month and encourage OVW to move promptly through the review cycle to ensure resources reach communities promptly. Service providers anticipate program disruptions due to these delayed grant opportunities, which we hope to minimize as much as possible.

These reckless disruptions will have unnecessary and lasting negative impacts on Arizona survivors of domestic violence and reduce public safety. To truly prioritize supporting law enforcement, helping victims, fighting crime, protecting children, combating human trafficking, and reducing recidivism, you must promptly reinstate these grants and prevent further disruption to these critical programs.

Sincerely,



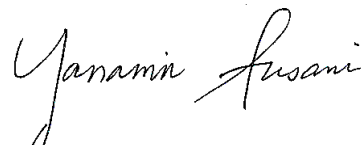
Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress