

March 18, 2016

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Mikulski:

As you begin work on the Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, we respectfully request that outlays from the Crime Victims Fund be as high as possible to support core Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) assistance programs and fulfill the needs of victims across the country.

In FY 2000, Congress began limiting the amount of Fund deposits that could be obligated each year. This was to provide a stable level of funding available for these programs in future years despite annual fluctuations in Fund deposits. Congress also amended the law to ensure that all receipts remain in the Fund for obligation in future fiscal years. The balances in the Fund have continued to grow and, at the start of the current fiscal year, exceeded \$14 billion. These resources are needed to support essential services to victims' assistance programs facing resource strains in every state.

We request that the Subcommittee oppose rescissions to the Fund. We also request the Subcommittee oppose efforts to use the Fund to cover expenses other than those authorized for the Fund and utilize the balances to address unmet needs. Diverting money from the Fund for other purposes threatens the continued viability of the Fund. We are concerned the President has proposed diverting money from the Fund for other purposes without taking steps to ensure the continued viability of the Fund. The resources in the Fund come not from taxpayers, but from fines and monetary penalties collected as a result of federal crimes.

While the Fund's balances are growing, so is the need for victim assistance and compensation. Victim service professionals have seen a clear rise in demand from a support network facing strained financial resources. Limits on state government funding, and significant decreases in private giving, present additional challenges. For the last two years the Committee has shown tremendous leadership by significantly increasing the outlays from the Fund to support VOCA programs. These resources have been critical to begin addressing the unmet need for victims' services. With the increased need for funding, and the growing balances in the Fund, now is the time to release additional money from the Fund for the purpose for which it was collected. We urge the Subcommittee to ensure funding robust enough to establish an appropriate funding stream from the Fund for Tribes. Individuals on

tribal lands experience high rates of domestic and sexual violence and their needs for victim services should be met.

The balances in the Fund are sufficient to provide increased assistance without jeopardizing the Fund's future sustainability. Accordingly, we strongly urge the Subcommittee to release as much funding as possible to help meet the dire needs of victims of all types of crime throughout the nation and that you oppose efforts to use the Fund to cover expenses other than those authorized by VOCA.

Thank you for your leadership in this critical area and for your consideration of this request.