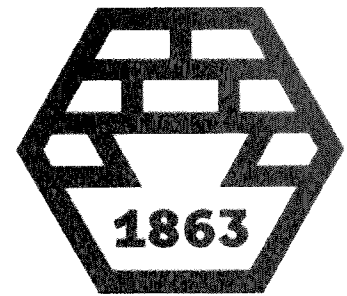




LEWISTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

David St. Pierre
Chief of Police



January 9, 2024

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to express my concern and, subsequently, my support for any additional funding for victim service agencies in Maine.

I have recently been made aware of significant VOCA funding cuts that will affect the community I and my officers serve. As the Chief of Police for the Lewiston Police Department, this has the potential for grave ramifications. Losing any of these critical services will leave a void that I know we will be unable to fill.

As a police department, we have made significant efforts over the years to enhance a victim-centered approach. We have made efforts to address the needs of victims of violent crimes in a more customized and interactive way, which allows us to minimize the rate of re-victimization and increase the engagement of our victims with the criminal justice process, all the way through adjudication. We strive to make our victims feel safe and connected to the level that they are comfortable with, throughout the process.

Our local victim service agencies not only enhance these victim relationships but allow us to conduct more comprehensive investigations and therefore more favorable outcomes for both victims and families. The response to the post-mass shooting is critical and the VOCA funds are needed to support these victim services.

Our officers interact with and rely on the advocates from these agencies, such as Safe Voices, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Services, the Immigrant Resource Center, just to name a few. Our detectives interact with victim/witness advocates from the District Attorney's Office almost on a daily basis. We make referrals to these agencies every single week and absolutely count on their advocates to provide services that we, as a law enforcement agency, are not independently capable of or trained for.

I cannot emphasize enough how losing this funding will cripple our ability to help the people who need us most. Any substantial reduction in funding will result in the loss of victim services, which will inevitably make prosecution of our cases more difficult, as we rely on advocates to help keep our victims safe, engaged and informed.



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