

Distributed by Rep. Josephson
Amendment # 69

From: Suzi P [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 6:03 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB41/HB39 AWAIC for CDVSA budget

Dear House Finance Committee members,

My name is Suzi Pearson and I am the Executive Director of Abused Women's Aid In Crisis or AWAIC in Anchorage. AWAIC is the only emergency domestic violence shelter in Anchorage with 67 beds, a 24-hour crisis line, transitional housing programs, and nonresidential support. AWAIC's funding comes from multiple sources however the largest funder for our shelter program is CDVSA.

The crimes of domestic violence and sexual assault is a scourge on our state. Last year AWAIC served 519 adults and children. With four months to go in this fiscal year we have already served 587. Additionally, we provided support via our crisis and support line to 6,425 last year and this year we have already responded to 8,582 calls. The demand for our services is increasing. Recruitment and retention have been extremely challenging for the past two years. We currently have nine vacant positions in shelter. We have been filling them with on call staff and overtime which has put stress on our team and is causing burnout.

Shelter programs funded by CDVSA have received flat funding for the last five years. There has been no increase to address the rising costs of utilities and staffing for our programs. One of the main issues has been because our wages do not compete with other companies and organizations who can pay an equal or higher amount without the stress of working in a crisis shelter. To adjust to market rates, AWAIC needs an additional \$150,000 to attract qualified candidates to fill the front-line positions of those working with a very vulnerable population.

In the state's budget there is a \$3 million one-time increment of general funds and \$3.5 million federal appropriation through Senator Murkowski. Without these one-time increments, services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault would be \$6.5 million short from previous year's funding. AWAIC supports this funding. One, AWAIC is requesting that the one-time general funds be put in the base for CDVSA to create a sustainable income source. Second, we are asking for additional funds to address the flat funding and that the state prepare to fill the hole when there is no longer an appropriation from the federal government to cover the gap to assist domestic violence and sexual assault programs throughout the state.

Thank you so much for your consideration of AWAIC's request.

Sincerely,

Suzi Pearson
Executive Director

[REDACTED]

From: Cheri Smith [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 12:40 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB 39

My name is Cheri Smith and I am the Executive Director of The LeeShore Center, which is a domestic violence and sexual assault victim service agency in Kenai, AK. I am writing in support of the budget for the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA) under Public Safety.

I'm aware there is a 3-million-dollar one-time increment of general funds in the CDVSA budget as well as a 3.5 million federal appropriation through a request from Senator Murkowski. Although I'm supportive of those funds being in the budget, I'd like to point out that without this one-time funding, services for victims would be 6.5 million dollars short from the previous years' funding. It's critical victim service agencies in the state have stable and adequate funding. I am in favor of at least moving the 3-million-dollar increment to base funding within the CDVSA budget in order to help ensure more adequate, stable funding is available.

At The LeeShore Center, we have seen an increase demand for services over the past year; for example, we are only in the 3rd quarter of our current fiscal grant year and have already exceeded the prior years total emergency shelter bednights by 26%. During FY22, our agency provided advocacy and support to close to 700 individuals accessing our services, some of which included emergency shelter, transitional housing, legal advocacy, crisis hotline calls, walk-in services, etc. We lost one advocate position a few years back and have not had adequate funding since to fill that position. We've expended over \$30,000 on hotel costs to house victims needing to isolate outside of our emergency shelter during the COVID pandemic; costs which were over and above our grant funding. We haven't had an increase in funding for a number of years and as costs in all areas of operation increase annually, it becomes more challenging to meet victim service needs and ensure an adequately funded agency.

I want to express my thanks to you for your efforts in addressing the issue of one-time funding vs. stable, adequate funding for victim service programs across the state and hope additional funding can be secured to ensure our services to victims can continue.

Thank you,
Cheri Smith, Executive Director
The LeeShore Center

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

[REDACTED]

From: Sarah-Kathryn Bryan [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 7:57 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: Testimony Regarding FY2024 Budget on Behalf of AWAIC

Good morning,

I am writing in my capacity as Board Member for Abused Women's Aid in Crisis (AWAIC), the only domestic violence emergency shelter in Anchorage, to request that the House Finance Committee increase the funding allocation to the Coalition on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA).

In addition to providing safe emergency shelter with 67 beds and a 24/7 crisis line, AWAIC relies on a combination of state and federal funding to provide case management and support for domestic violence survivors during and after their use of emergency shelter services. In the past several years, AWAIC has received flat funding from the state.

AWAIC has had significant challenges providing competitive wages due to this flat funding from its grantors. With additional funding from the state, AWAIC will be able to offer a competitive wage to higher quality applicants. The ability to offer a competitive wage will help AWAIC recruit and retain staff who are competent to provide safe shelter and services to domestic violence survivors.

The state's investment in victim services around Alaska has been critical in maintaining operations for domestic violence shelters and ensuring the safety of victims fleeing violence. CDVSA funds are the primary source of funding for AWAIC's emergency shelter. Furthermore, the federal government has decreased its funding for ongoing shelter support during the past three years, which increases domestic violence shelters' reliance on state funds. The state has provided crucial support to meet survivors' needs by providing flat funding to CDVSA.

Your support of the increase in the CDVSA's funding allocation and transition of funds to the baseline will provide meaningful support to shelters throughout the state. In this year's proposed budget for CDVSA there has been an increase suggested as well as a transfer of funds to the baseline, which will create stability for the future of CDVSA and victim service programs.

Thank you for your diligent work representing Alaskans.

Respectfully,

Sarah Kathryn Bryan
Board Member, AWAIC
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Meghan Carson [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 7:44 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: Budget Proposal for CDVSA / AWAIC Impacts

Hello,

My name is Meghan Carson and I am the current treasurer and board member of over four years of Abused Women's Aid in Crisis (AWAIC). I am writing to respectfully urge your support of the increase to the Council on Domestic Violence (CDVSA) funding allocation in this year's budget proposal.

As you know, AWAIC is the only domestic violence emergency shelter in Anchorage and provides critical services to those experiencing assault, violence, sexual abuse. The emergency shelter and 24/7 crisis line are the core programs of the organization and are funded through local, state and federal grants. CDVSA funds are the primary source of funding for AWAIC's emergency shelter; CDVSA funding combines a mixture of state and federal funds but neither have been consistent over the last several years and in most cases, the organization has received flat funding. This has posed significant challenges to the organization in an environment with rising costs, particularly in wages needed to attract quality candidates. **Flat funding from CDVSA and other grantors has restricted AWAIC's ability to offer competitive wages critical in recruiting and retaining quality candidates. The ongoing employment vacancies directly translate to a negative impact to some of our community's most vulnerable individuals.** If AWAIC is able to provide a higher hourly rate, AWAIC will be able to compete more effectively to attract and retain quality applicants, **ensuring victims of domestic violence and sexual assault have access to the services and resources that keep them safe.**

The state's investment in victim services has been and will continue to be critical in maintaining operations for domestic violence shelters and ensuring the safety of victims fleeing violence and potentially life threatening situations for themselves and/or their families. Again, CDVSA funds are the primary source of funding for the emergency shelter. **Federal funds allocated toward supporting shelters have reduced significantly in the last three years, necessitating state funds to continue support and increase funding.** The state has stepped up in the last three years to provide flat funding to CDVSA, however as we noted, flat funding poses significant challenges in a landscape of rising costs.

In this year's proposed budget for CDVSA there has been an increase suggested as well as a transfer of funds to the baseline which will create stability and continuity for the future of CDVSA and victim service programs. **Your support of the increase in CDVSA's funding allocation and transition of funds to the baseline will provide meaningful and critical support to shelters throughout Alaska.**

I encourage you to please support this budget proposal and help your fellow Alaskans in need.

Respectfully,

Meghan

Meghan A. Carson, CPA, CFP®
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Mitchell Hansen [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 1:03 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: CDVSA Funding

Dear committee members,

I'm writing to express my support for two things regarding the CDVSA budget. This program is essential for organizations like AWAIC to do their work that is so critical to the Anchorage community. In FY21 AWAIC provided a total of 14,081 total shelter safe nights for adults and children. Without this support some of these people could become unhoused, adding to strain on other services in the city.

My recommendations are as follows:

- Move the recommended one-time funding for FY24 to the base for CDVSA
- An increase to cover the increasing costs of shelters doing business – inflation has caused major problems & agencies have received flat funding for the last five years.

Thank you for your time.

Mitchell Hansen
Anchorage Resident

Haugstad Advocacy & Litigation Office, LLC

12350 Industry Way, Suite 203,
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March 20, 2023

House Finance Committee
c/o: housefinance@akleg.gov

Dear Committee Members,

This letter is sent to state my support for the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA) program through Abused Women's Aid in Crisis (AWAIC). Specifically, I support: 1. moving the recommended one-time funding for FY24 to the base for CDVSA; and 2. increasing funding to cover increasing costs, particularly those associated with inflation.

AWAC is worth the investment. AWAIC is the only domestic violence emergency shelter in Anchorage. It provides a 67-bed emergency shelter, 24/7 crisis line, and other core programs. It also provides essential services to those not residing in our shelter including case management, support, and groups, and has two transitional housing programs. These services are funded through local, state, and federal grants.

AWAIC's funding from CDVSA combines a mixture of state and federal funds but neither have been consistent over the last several years. It has received flat funding for the last 5 years. Such flat funding causes major problems particularly associated with inflationary changes. AWAIC has experienced significant challenges providing competitive wages due to such flat funding. Recruitment and retention are essential to ensure victims are provided the necessary services to keep them safe.

CDVSA funds are the primary source of funding for AWAIC's emergency shelter. The state's investment in victim services around Alaska has been critical in maintaining operations for domestic violence shelters and ensuring the safety of victims fleeing violence.

Federal funds saw a significant dip in their ability to continue with ongoing support to shelters in the last three years and as such there has been a need for state funds to continue their support and increase funding. The state has stepped up these last three years to provide flat funding to CDVSA. We encourage the state to continue and increase this support.

In this year's proposed budget for CDVSA there has been an increase suggested as well as a transfer of funds to the baseline which will create stability for the future of CDVSA and victim service programs. I urge you to support these measures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bryan D. Haugstad".

Bryan D. Haugstad

[REDACTED]

From: Saralyn Tabachnick [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 23, 2023 2:12 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: DPS-CDVSA essential budget support

Dear Reader,

I'm writing regarding the DPS- CDVSA budget, which provides essential funding for programs like AWARE, serving survivors in Juneau and nine rural communities in Northern SE Alaska, as well as serving men through our Juneau Choice & Accountability Program and offering prevention planning and programming.

Currently in the budget there is an amount of 3 million dollars from a one time increment of General Funds and 3.5 million federal appropriation through a request from Senator Murkowski. Without these one-time increments, services for victims would be 6.5 million dollars short from previous years' funding. This funding is critical for us to maintain the same level of service we are currently providing.

While we appreciate that one-time increments allow victim service providers the same amount of funding as previous years, the costs we are experiencing are not the same – rising fuel costs, utility increases, food costs, and starting wages require additional funding for us to provide the SAME level of services as in the past. Our utility bills increased by 131% over this time last year. Additionally, services for victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence are an integral part of the criminal legal system, as we support people navigating both civil and criminal issues, and through their individual processes of working to create safety and stability for themselves, and often for their children/families as well.

Thank you for helping stabilize funding for AWARE and like programs supporting some of Alaska's most vulnerable people.

Additionally, AWARE is in the unique position of also offering services through our Battering Intervention Program (BIP) for men who have abused power and control in their intimate partner relationships. JCAP, the Juneau Choice & Accountability Program, routinely receives referrals from the court, probation and parole officers, Lemon Creek Correctional Center, and other community agencies. During COVID, the program moved to meeting on zoom, however with the increase in referrals from all over Southeast, we are maintaining a Zoom class while also adding an in person class. The growing need continues to stretch us. JCAP provides men with the opportunity to hold themselves accountable and to make changes in their lives for the benefit of themselves, their partners, and their families. At the same time, AWARE advocates routinely provide safety checks for victims and partners of men in the classes. This violence is 100% preventable. Again, our fixed costs are growing. Additionally funding will

support our ability to meet the need for BIP services, helping men move the needle in changing their abusive and controlling behavior.

AWARE's comprehensive programming also includes prevention strategies. AWARE oversees Haa To'och Liche'esh, Juneau's Violence Prevention Coalition. With increased funding, we'll be able to continue and grow empowerment and wellness programs for school age children through Girls on the Run and Boys Run/i Toowu' Klatseen. These programs instill healthy life skills and resilience through place based curriculum and safety and life skill development. Trained volunteer coaches guide participants through activities that creatively teach teamwork, self-confidence, decision making and communication skills, and at the end of the program, the ability to run a 5K. I urge you to fund the increment for BIPS and Prevention.

Together we can make a difference and create safer, stronger relationships for Alaskans.
Thank you.

Sincerely,
Saralyn Tabachnick

--

Saralyn Tabachnick, she/her
Deputy Director
AWARE, Inc.
PO Box 20809
Juneau, AK 99802



All that we are arises with our thoughts.
With our thoughts, we make our world.
~ Buddha

[REDACTED]

From: Ronnie Leach [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 23, 2023 9:38 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: Victim Service Program Funding

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Currently in the budget there is an amount of 3 million dollars from a One Time Increment of General Funds and 3.5 million federal appropriations through a request from Senator Murkowski. Without these one-time increments, services for victims would be 6.5 million dollars short from previous years' funding. We support this funding.

While we appreciate that one-time increments allow victim service providers the same amount of funding as previous years, this is not a given and we don't know what next year will bring. With the increased cost of utilities, food, and transportation, as well as the increase in employee pay, the dynamics for victim service providers is no longer the same as it was pre-pandemic.

On the Southern Kenai Peninsula, it has been extremely difficult to compete with other entities regarding pay. For example, McDonald's beginning wage is \$20.00, as a non-profit, without guaranteed funding we are unable to pay our advocates the new competitive wage. We can only afford to start advocates out at \$16.00 an hour. Safeway's starting pay has been reported to be between the \$18.00 to \$20.00 range. Again, we cannot compete with this as we are a non-profit and our victims service funding amounts aren't guaranteed from year to year. The funding instability makes it difficult to maintain a long-term staff.

We greatly appreciate that the legislature is trying to address the issue of one-time funding and the lack of additional funds to meet the increased costs of providing services to victims *and* we hope they are able to find more so services can continue.

~Best

Ronnie Leach, MHRM
Executive Director

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Ronnie Leach, MHRM
Executive Director
South Peninsula Haven House



1057 W. Fireweed Lane, Suite 230
Anchorage, AK 99503

Crisis Lines: 907.276.7273 or 800.478.8999
Tel. 907.276.7279 | staralaska.com

March 23, 2023

Dear House Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this letter in support of adequate funding for the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in the Department of Public Safety's budget.

STAR began serving survivors of sexual trauma forty-five years ago, employs an active Prevention and Education Department, dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse, sexual assault, and harassment. Our Direct Services Department responds with law enforcement and forensic nursing to every sexual assault crime reported in the Municipality of Anchorage. Moreover, STAR Advocates provide necessary resources, emergency financial assistance and emotional support to survivors from all over the state. In 2022, over 100 program participants were from rural areas of Alaska.

Victims' services are a necessary function of Public Safety. Yet, the Council is funded much differently than, say, Department of Corrections. It's as though one is considered "required" operations while shelters and victim services will "find a way to make do". Each year for the last five years, the Council has received one-time increments to help maintain the same level of funding. Without the one-time increments in this year's budget, funding for victims' services would face a \$6.5 million shortfall. I am truly thankful for that support. However, it is obvious with inflation the same amount of funding over that time period results in decreased funding.

Our services are required to be available 24 hours a day, adequately staffed by trained professionals, and performed in collaboration with law enforcement, medical professionals, courts and prosecutors. We are required to collaborate with all manner of social services, schools, and hospitals. We need to consistently perform outreach activities to make people aware of our services and promote personal safety and violence prevention strategies. Then, we are required to fundraise. We write multiple grants each year to fund every piece of our victims' services organization, from employee salaries, volunteers' training and in-school presentation equipment. STAR juggles multiple funding sources, which operate in different fiscal years with a broad variance in reporting requirements. We submit nearly 100 reports on grants each year. Most funders want to support a new project, not fund keeping the lights on or paying staff a living wage. So, we host fundraisers and an annual Masquerade Ball, begging businesses around the community for items we can auction off to raise money. When was the last time DOC had to hold a charity auction in order to maintain staffing levels?

Yes, we are nonprofits, not one of us a government agency. I venture to say you will never get more value and utility than by using a mission-focused nonprofit to provide necessary services. That is, as long as that nonprofit can maintain staffing levels, recruit qualified employees, and offer competitive benefits. That certainly is more challenging when trying to hire for a position requiring 24 hour in-person response, which occurs on average once a day (or night, as the case may be) in Anchorage. On top of salary and benefits, you have to attempt to create a work culture for your staff that encourages self-care and minimizes vicarious trauma. We bear witness to experiences most people don't want to imagine or think about, and they stay with us long after a shift, a pay period, or a career.



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Add to that the necessity of maintaining response during a pandemic, from which staff have lasting injury and personal losses.

So, the budget "cuts", as we should call them, have an impact. I'm not sure how much longer statewide victim services can continue to provide quality response with necessary positions left unfilled and unable to pay enough to find qualified candidates.

I urge the legislature to not only support the current budget of CDVSA, but to find consistent funding for victims' services moving forward. Prioritize the safety, support and healing offered by victims' service programs throughout the state.

Sincerely,

Keeley Olson,
Executive Director