



Family Violence Law Center

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To: Oakland City Council

From: Family Violence Law Center Policy & Advocacy Manager, Tunisia Owens

RE: 2023-2025 Budget and Stronger Support for Gender-Based Violence Prevention

Date: June 7, 2023

Family Violence Law Center requests that the Oakland FY 2024-2026 budget maintain funding for violence prevention grants to community based organizations through the Department of Violence Prevention (DVP). This funding was voter-approved and painstakingly allocated according to community priorities and needs, and any reduction will further destabilize the communities intended to benefit from these core programs.

During the 2020-2021 Reimagining Public Safety Process in Oakland, community members worked diligently to determine how funding could efficiently and effectively serve the safety concerns across the city. This facilitated process was carried out over several months and included presentations and question and answer sessions, in addition to data-sharing from the Oakland Police Department to the Task Force. At the conclusion of this process, a large number of recommendations were made to inform and improve Oakland's response to violence. A major outcome of that process was the Oakland City Council's vote to reallocate resources from law enforcement to invest in violence prevention and alternative interventions to violence. According to news sources, the 2021 reallocation of \$18 million in funding to the Department of Violence Prevention represented only a three percent decrease in funding to the \$341 million police budget.

FVLC and our subgrantee direct service agencies received a combined \$2,850,000 in funding from the Department of Violence Prevention to do violence prevention work in Oakland high schools and to provide legal, 24-hour hotline, emergency relocation, mobile advocacy, and therapy services. A reduction in funding by 26%, or \$741,000 would severely limit our ability to serve survivors, leading to unanswered calls on nights and weekends, fewer school-based programs to support Oakland students, and slower follow up on police reports and to those in crisis who call for help, endangering survivors, their families and all Oakland communities.

Recommendation 1: Robustly fund gender-based violence intervention to scale in Oakland

The Department of Violence Prevention dedicates only 25% of grants to strategies for intervention in gender-based violence, although gender based violence is one of the most pervasive forms of violence in our communities. Domestic violence and sexual assault are severely underreported crimes, and families experiencing violence in the home are likely to be de-stabilized without intervention. During FY 2021-2022, FVLC provided crisis response services to 1,574 Oakland domestic violence survivors and provided over 7,398 crisis response hours. We also made follow up calls offering services and wrap around support on 3,482 Oakland domestic violence police reports. Additionally, we provided 871 clients with legal assistance and 113 clients were provided with emergency housing through shelter, housing placement, or hotel relocation. Domestic Violence is one of the biggest risk factors for women's homelessness and FVLC works to prevent survivors from becoming homeless through our integrated and holistic service model.

Recommendation 2: Secure additional funding for gender-based violence prevention efforts in Oakland

FVLC provided case management services to 112 clients and delivered over 482 hours of case management. FVLC was able to support families with 19 children aged 0-5 through our therapy program. This healing work represented 486 hours of therapy support. FVLC also offers services in 7 Oakland high schools through the VIP Team. Our gender based violence educators reached 75 students in West and central East Oakland with healthy relationship and positive communication programming in Q3 of 2023. Portions of West and East Oakland have some of the highest rates of violence in the city, therefore reaching youth early is a deep investment in shifting violence in Oakland.

Recommendation 3: Prioritize preserving long-term funding to the Department of Violence Prevention for grants to community based organizations for violence prevention.

Current projections for the number of individuals not served by a reduction in funding across agencies is almost 5000 people. The nearly 30% cut to community-based direct service organizations will be drastic and have dire consequences. For example, FVLC saw a dramatic increase from 2019, when we received 2,169 DV reports, to 2020, when we received 4,076 reports, a 188% increase in just one year, and we have seen continued increases in service requests in subsequent years. Other providers have also reported increasing levels of violence among their clients and greater needs. A decrease in funding will cause many families to go without the critical services we provide.

We request that the city council reexamine budget priorities and eliminate cuts to the violence prevention funding and look to other sources to balance the budget. We are first responders and include ourselves in the safety net that nurtures and protects the Oakland Community, and a safety net with gaping holes will not provide much safety

Tunisia M. Owens