



Family Violence Law Center

470 27th Street, Oakland, CA 94612
800.947.8301

June 7, 2023

Honorable Council President Bas
1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza,
Oakland, CA 94612

RE: Mayor's Budget to Support Gender-Based Violence Prevention Efforts

Dear Honorable Council President Bas:

First and foremost, thank you for your continued commitment to creating a balanced budget during these unprecedented times. We recognize that this is an extremely difficult task and one that the city of Oakland has never experienced before. We stand in strong solidarity with the community and city council's 2021 decision to provide \$18 million of funding to the Department of Violence Prevention in recognition that a change needed to happen with respect to public safety in Oakland. **We write to request that the Oakland FY 2024-2026 budget not reduce funding for gender based violence intervention and prevention programming provided to community based organizations through the Department of Violence Prevention (DVP). It is imperative that we maintain our current level of funding for violence prevention in order to maintain our high level of service provision to the community in the time of great need.**

Forty-five hundred individuals is the conservative estimate for those who will not be served if the DVP's budget is cut by 26%. This nearly thirty percent cut to community based organizations- all direct service providers- will be drastic and negative. Gender-based violence programs have never been funded to scale and these cuts will leave victims and families without services to address their trauma. FVLC and our subgrantees provide crisis intervention, 24-hour support, legal services, youth prevention programming, therapy services, bedside advocacy for survivors, mobile advocacy during a crisis, and support services for survivors at risk of becoming unhoused. The DVP funds organizations that provide essential services **before moments of crisis, during, and after the fact.** Few other funding sources allocated by the city addresses the various phases of support needed for those experiencing violence. We are dedicated to supporting not just the whole person but the whole community and we cannot effectively do so with the severe budget cuts currently proposed.

While we are no longer in a state of emergency due to the pandemic, the impacts left by it are still being felt by our community. FVLC receives all domestic violence police reports for the City of Oakland to do outreach to survivors in need. From 2019-2020 FVLC saw a dramatic increase in the number of police reports, there was 188% increase. Due to limited capacity and resources, our partner organizations Love Never Fails and Building Futures have been unable to accommodate all the requests for mental health and housing assistance. Perhaps most disturbing, is that many providers such as Ruby's Place are reporting increased levels of violence among their clients. The alarming growth of gender-based violence in Oakland **speaks volumes to the need for greater investment in prevention efforts.**

We request that the city reexamine the budget, prioritize preserving the investment in violence prevention, and look to other sources to balance the budget. We encourage you to explore other funding sources for departments that do not provide direct services to the community. We ask that you consider reducing the number of police academies or to pay for those academies with other funding sources. Additionally, we would like the budget increase for animal services to be reconsidered, and assessed to determine if those funds can be better utilized to support direct services. The Department of Violence Prevention is actively responding to the crisis in our city and is already underfunded compared to the level of need we service, it is imperative that we do not make further cuts to an already hurting budget.

We urgently ask for your support in maintaining the full DVP budget as we continue reimagining public safety even in moments of economic downturn. Thank you for your attention to the needs of survivors of violence and service providers. We look forward to working with you on how best to support violence prevention efforts during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

Erin Scott

Erin Scott, Executive Director

In court and in our community, every day.

Attachment: FVLC GBV Prevention Memo

CC: Council Member Fife
Council Member Gallo
Council Member Jenkins
Council Member Kalb
Council Member Kaplan
Council Member Ramachandran
Council Member Reid