



Maryland  
Hospital Association

February 13, 2020

To: The Honorable Cory V McCray, Chairman  
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee- Public Safety, Transportation, and Environment Subcommittee

From: Jennifer Witten, Vice President, Government Affairs  
Maryland Hospital Association

Re: Letter of Information- Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth and Victim Services

Dear Chairman McCray:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 61 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth and Victim Services' budget. Maryland's nonprofit hospitals and health systems care for millions of people each year, treating 2.3 million in emergency departments and delivering more than 67,000 babies. The 108,000 people they employ are [caring for Maryland](#) around-the-clock every day—delivering leading edge, high-quality medical service. Unfortunately, all too often that includes caring for those harmed through abuse and violence.

In almost every county in the state, hospital-based sexual assault forensic exam (SAFE) programs employ forensic nurse examiners—registered nurses specially trained in evidence collection and delivering trauma-informed care to victims of violence and abuse. State law ensures survivors of sexual assault and child abuse have access to emergency medical treatment and forensic services for injuries sustained as a result of the assault, with no out-of-pocket expenses. However, this reimbursement does not always cover the full cost of care nor additional services forensic nurses provide when they care for victims of other forms of abuse and when forensic services are rendered. Because it is our mission to serve any and all victims, many hospitals have to absorb this cost. As a result, the majority of hospital-based programs are sustained through grant funding, including the federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants administered by the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention. VOCA Victim Assistance grants help organizations, like hospitals, that provide direct services to victims.<sup>i</sup>

The federal crime victims fund gives money to states for victim compensation and victim service programs.<sup>ii</sup> Without state intervention, the 33% funding cut to Maryland's annual federal funding could affect the sustainability of these hospital-based SAFE programs where providers care for people during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives.

For more information, please contact:  
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<sup>i</sup> Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention. (n.d.). Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)

<sup>ii</sup> Congressional Research Services. (May 2, 2018). FY2018 Appropriations for the Department of Justice.