



STATE OF FLORIDA

**ASHLEY MOODY
ATTORNEY GENERAL**

November 30, 2023

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Stop diverting monies from crime victims (pass S. 2661)

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

For almost four decades, the Victims of Crime Act (“VOCA”) has provided critical funding to victims’ service organizations and direct compensation to victims of crime. VOCA-funded state victim assistance grants supported direct services, such as emergency shelter, crisis intervention, and counseling, to over 9.8 million crime victims in fiscal year 2022. The Florida Office of Attorney General, like many state attorneys general’s offices, acts as a conduit for funds to victim organizations in Florida. Like most states in the last several years, the Office of Attorney General has seen a large decrease in VOCA funds it can disburse.

This decrease was caused in part because of recent declining collections in the fines and fees that were deposited into the VOCA fund. However, these declining collections should not have required precipitous decreases in VOCA monies for crime victims. In 2000, Congress placed an annual cap on how much could be spent out of the VOCA fund to support and protect crime victims. At the time, this cap was sold as necessary to ensure a stable, long-term funding stream to protect against annual fluctuations in deposits. Had that been true, I would not be writing you this letter and there would have been at worst a gradual decline in VOCA funds available to victims. But, Congress used this cap as a gimmick to allow the government to spend billions on programs unrelated to crime victims diverting monies from the VOCA fund. As a result of this gimmick, Congress spent tens of billions of non-taxpayer, non-general fund dollars on unrelated programs, at the expense of victims of crime. Had Congress not utilized this

gimmick, billions of dollars would currently be in the VOCA fund and available to crime victims. Presumably, those dollars could have dealt with the reality of a temporary downturn in collections instead of decreasing the cap available to crime victims.

While the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021 signed on July 22, 2021, helped make these decreases less devastating these last several years, Florida has approximately \$37,000,000 less to distribute this fiscal year and approximately \$77,000,000 less to distribute in fiscal year 2024 compared to fiscal year 2022. These decreases have caused and will have detrimental effects on Florida's crime victims. The impacts that these reductions will have on crime victims are a direct result of Congress's unwillingness to live within its means. Congress should pass S.2661 to prevent further raiding of the VOCA fund in the future. I also would request that Congress consider additional actions to undo the harm it has caused and continues to cause to crime victims with its past reckless behavior.

Sincerely,



Ashley Moody
Florida Attorney General

cc: Senator Marco Rubio
Senator Rick Scott