

2025 -- H 5390

LC000958

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY -- VICTIMS OF CRIME TRAUMA INFORMED MOBILIZATION ACT

Introduced By: Representatives Craven, Dawson, Kazarian, Furtado, Boylan, McEntee, and Caldwell

Date Introduced: February 07, 2025

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative findings.

2 The general assembly finds as follows:

3 (1) Over 42,000 victims of crime receive lifesaving services from Rhode Island victim
4 services organizations each year;

5 (2) These victim service organizations support some of the most vulnerable populations in
6 Rhode Island, including minor victims of child abuse, sexual assault survivors, elder abuse victims,
7 domestic violence victims, and survivors of human trafficking, community violence, and gun
8 violence;

9 (3) Federal funds allocated to Rhode Island for victim services have been sharply reduced
10 by nearly forty percent (40%) for FY2025, threatening the safety and recovery of crime victims;

11 (4) These victim service organizations provide services to crime survivors in crisis,
12 education programs, and advocacy and prevention efforts to better support victims and
13 communities affected by many different forms of violence;

14 (5) These victim services organizations envision a society where violence is not tolerated
15 because communities are enlightened and responsive to the needs of victims and their children,
16 focusing on policy, prevention, survivor activism, communications, and training to achieve this
17 critical goal;

18 (6) These victim service organizations provide a wide array of services for victims of crime,

1 including a 24/7 statewide Victims' of Crime Helpline and individual agency hotlines, support
2 victims at crime scenes and immediately after, referrals for crime victim's financial compensation,
3 restraining order advocacy, emergency shelter and housing, support for group or individual
4 counseling services, child advocacy services, assistance with pending court processes, assistance
5 with civil legal services, and more;

6 (7) The work of victim service organizations helps victims heal, reintegrate into society,
7 and break the cycle of abuse. This work not only aids in their recovery, but also reduces future state
8 costs, including emergency room visits, mental health services, shelter expenses, and potential
9 criminal activity. In addition, investing in victim services fosters healthier, more economically
10 stable communities by enabling survivors to return to work and reducing dependency on public
11 assistance programs;

12 (8) Rhode Island has thus far invested only minimal state funds to support these life-saving
13 programs that break the cycle of violence;

14 (9) This grant funding will fill the significant gap in current funding, thereby allowing these
15 essential victim services organizations to fulfill their missions to aid and support victims of violent
16 crime in the state.

17 SECTION 2. Chapter 42-7.3 of the General Laws entitled "Department of Public Safety"
18 is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

19 **42-7.3-11. Victims of crime trauma informed mobilization grant fund.**

20 (a) The department of public safety is hereby directed to create the victims of crime trauma
21 informed mobilization fund or the VICTIM Fund. This fund will support a competitive grant
22 program aimed at assisting nonprofit organizations in Rhode Island that work with victims of crime
23 ("victim service organizations").

24 (1) VICTIM fund grants will be allocated to Rhode Island nonprofit (501(c)(3))
25 organizations with annual budgets under fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) that are actively
26 providing victim service programs.

27 (2) These victim service organizations shall be victim advocacy and/or direct service
28 organizations. Municipalities and state agencies shall not receive these grant funds.

29 (3) Funds from these grants shall supplement and not supplant other funds granted to victim
30 service organizations.

31 (4) Priority consideration shall be given to organizations proposing innovative service
32 delivery methods, culturally specific programs, or strategies to address underserved populations.

33 (b) In order to ensure that victim services organizations receive timely funding to address
34 immediate needs and maintain uninterrupted support for victims, VICTIM fund grants shall be

1 allocated to victim service organizations by January of the fiscal year in which they were
2 appropriated and not carried over into a future fiscal year.

3 (c) For each fiscal year, beginning in fiscal year 2026, the general assembly shall make an
4 appropriation by separate line item in the budget of at least thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000) to
5 fund the VICTIM Fund.

6 (1) The thirty million-dollar (\$30,000,000) allocation shall only be used for grants to non-
7 profit organizations as described in this section. The appropriation to the department of public
8 safety shall be adjusted as necessary to meet the needs of the program on an on-going basis, without
9 disruption.

10 (2) The department of public safety shall provide the general assembly with an annual
11 report in December of each year, detailing how and to whom the grant funds were allocated and
12 any outcomes associated with the funding.

13 (d) In addition to funding grants to victim service organizations as outlined in this section,
14 the general assembly shall include a separate line-item appropriation in the budget each fiscal year
15 to cover the cost of one or more full-time equivalent positions at the department of public safety to
16 assist in the administration and implementation of the VICTIM Fund grant program.

17 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC
SAFETY -- VICTIMS OF CRIME TRAUMA INFORMED MOBILIZATION ACT

1 This act would establish a VICTIM Fund grant program to support nonprofit organizations
2 providing victim services in Rhode Island. The act would allocate at least thirty million dollars
3 (\$30,000,000) annually for this program, along with funding for a full-time equivalent position
4 within the department of public safety to manage and oversee the grant program.

5 This act would take effect on July 1, 2025.

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