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Attention: Gov. FOCUS Committee

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From: Janelle Melohn, Division Director, Iowa Attorney General-Crime Victim Assistance Division

FOCUS Committee Recommendation Response

Additional Recommendation

Returning citizens experience a plethora of barriers as they integrate back into Iowa's communities. I fully support taking measures to break down the barriers to their success. With this being said, victims of crime also face very similar barriers on their path to healing, stabilization and self-sufficiency following victimization. Job-training, financial literacy, access to formal documents (state ID, DL, birth certificates, SS card, etc.), substance abuse and mental health treatment, educational opportunities, legal services, safe and affordable housing and transportation are some of their greatest needs. Currently Iowa's appropriation to serve victims of crime is 1.7% of its investment to incarcerate and supervise individuals (\$5mil: \$290mil). Iowa's investment into services for victims of crime ensured more than 10,000 survivors had access to both emergency and long-term options in SFY19. I provide this context, because I believe any recommendation(s) this committee puts forward should also provide for equitable options for victims. As such, I've outlined a recommendation with options for the Governor to consider.

Iowa should elect to invest in some/all of the following for victims of crime in addition to current support:

1. Rapid-rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing options
 - a. Incentivize developers to create affordable housing options in rural and urban areas
 - b. Based on statistics provided by one of Iowa's housing-focused victim service agencies; using the rapid-rehousing model (6-24 mos. of assistance) costs on average, \$3,547/client or \$4.79/day. Permanent supportive housing, with ongoing support as long as necessary, costs on average, \$13,215/client. Nationally, the average cost for rapid-rehousing is \$6,000-\$8,000/client.
2. Transportation options
 - a. Vehicles for victim service agencies
 - b. Commercial transportation options (ride share fare, cab fare, bus tokens, etc.)
3. Educational opportunities
 - a. Contribute to the Alice Barton Scholarship Fund and/or similar education and job training opportunities (<https://www.icadv.org/alice-barton-scholarship-program>)
 - b. HiSET opportunities in shelter/victim service outreach office settings
4. Access to mobility documents
 - a. Driver's license-waiver of past fines; payment plan options
 - b. Implement DOT kiosk option in each of Iowa's six victim service regions

5. Mental Health & Substance Abuse treatment options
 - a. Incentivize mental health providers employment at victim service agencies (state tax credit, etc.)
 - b. Invest in mental health professionals who specialize in co-occurring disorders
6. Restitution Improvements
 - a. Standardization of restitution collection processes among supervised individuals
 - b. Iowa Courts system improvements to better track victim restitution statewide
 - c. Provide educational opportunities for County Clerks of Court regarding IA statute and appropriate designation of fines/fees paid by formerly incarcerated individuals
 - d. Clarify victim pecuniary damages in the priority of payment, ahead of other legal financial obligations except for driver's licenses and child support. Once the pecuniary damages are satisfied, apply payments to all LFOs. Do not allow for interest charges on non-pecuniary legal financial obligations as long as regular victim restitution payments are made.
7. Legal Services
 - a. Establish and invest in a Victim Rights Enforcement unit at the State level
 - b. Provide for access to legal services for issues such as divorce/custody issues, protective VISA options for immigrants, Title IX representation on college/university campuses, vacateur/record expungement options, etc.
8. Employment Options
 - a. An equivalent of re-entry advisors (job-mapping); placements, resume development, interviewing skills, etc.