



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy, Crisis Services Deliver Petition Calling for Funding Restoration

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY September 2, 2014

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Vital Agency that has Served WNY Since 1968 is Confronting Potentially Unprecedented Loss of Funding for Critical Programs that Support Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

Funding Cuts Would Negatively Impact Over 8,000 Local Victims of Violent Crime.

Thousands Sign Petition to Stop Potential Funding Loss Facing Crisis Services.

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, and Crisis Services today delivered their petition calling on the New York State Office of Victim Services (OVS) to reverse their decision to dramatically reduce funding for critical programs that support victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Over 2,000 people signed the petition to protect Crisis Services – which has been gathering support on Kennedy’s website for the last two weeks.

“This outpouring of community support will help send a message to Albany, loudly and clearly. Western New Yorkers stand united in calling on the Office of Victim Services to reverse their decision and restore funding for Crisis Services,” said **Senator Tim Kennedy**.

“Without this critical funding, thousands of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault will be left without the services and support they need during their recovery and as they pursue justice. Together, as a community, we urge OVS to provide Western New York with these necessary resources which survivors of violent crime desperately need and deserve.”

Crisis Services recently learned that OVS funding they have received for over 20 years may be cut by over \$300,000 – an unprecedented level, which jeopardizes the future of several services and programs now available to crime victims in Erie County. If this misguided funding decision from within the OVS bureaucracy is not reversed, it will likely affect thousands of Western New Yorkers who currently rely on – or may someday need – the support of Crisis Services. Over 8,000 survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault may not have access to needed support services if this funding cut remains in place.

Senator Kennedy and Crisis Services officials hand-delivered their petition and its over 2,000 signatures today to the Buffalo office of the New York State Office of Victim Services, and they sent an additional copy straight to OVS Director Elizabeth Cronin in Albany.

Crisis Services Executive Director Doug Fabian said, “The Crisis Services staff threatened by this funding cut serve roughly 8,000 Western New York victims annually in area hospitals, in

the courts, in local police departments and in counseling sessions here at the agency. There is no other local agency that offers the breadth of services that we do. A funding cut of this size is completely unprecedented in the Advocate Program's 36 year history. We are grateful to know that Western New York has our back as we face this challenge, and we are indebted to Senator Tim Kennedy's willingness to take on the state bureaucracy to reverse this unfortunate decision."

Crisis Services is doing everything they can to ensure uninterrupted support for survivors of violent crime that they are currently serving, and they have turned to Senator Kennedy to help them push the state's bureaucracy to reverse a decision that would negatively impact thousands of Western New Yorkers. If the decision is not changed, however, many crime victims may be left without needed services.

Crisis Services has fostered key collaborative partnerships with law enforcement, the courts system, local hospitals and social-service providers to ensure victims of domestic violence and sexual assault have full access to needed support and services. The Crisis Services Advocate Program – which has been designated by the state Department of Health as the rape crisis center for Buffalo and Erie County – provides immediate response and confidential support to survivors of domestic violence, elder abuse, rape and sexual assault on a 24-hour basis. They provide these vital services around-the-clock in all emergency rooms across Erie County, while also offering survivors criminal justice advocacy, case management services and counseling.

With this loss in funding, Crisis Services will be forced to eliminate all support for the Advocate Program's longstanding domestic violence program, leaving victims without an advocate to help them through traumatic experiences. Losing this funding will also result in the removal of all domestic violence case managers and advocates now stationed in the Buffalo Police Department and Buffalo City Court. Currently, this partnership with the

criminal justice system helps victims confront the challenges, difficulties and fears associated with criminal investigations and court trials.

Crisis Services is also one of our region's only providers of free trauma-based therapy services. Because the services are free of charge, this greatly increases the accessibility of necessary therapy services for low-income families and individuals. Unfortunately, this funding loss means the elimination of these services also.

This funding decision could jeopardize the status of Crisis Services as the most comprehensive crisis center in upstate New York. It will impact their ability to carry out the lifesaving work they perform for our community every day. In addition to the programs for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault – which will be directly impacted by these funding cuts – Crisis Services also operates a 24-hour hotline that provides suicide prevention services and offers help to anyone experiencing a personal, emotional or mental health crisis.

“Since Crisis Services began serving our community in 1968, the comprehensive array of services they provide have supported the recovery of victims of violent crime while helping individuals through crises and effectively preventing suicide. Any funding loss that jeopardizes their work is deeply troubling to our entire community and could have catastrophic consequences,” Kennedy said. “For years, Western New Yorkers in need of help have always been able to turn to Crisis Services. They’ve been there for us, our families, our friends and neighbors. Now it’s our turn to be there for them.”

Senator Kennedy and Crisis Services have been joined by the Buffalo Police Department, Erie County Sheriff's Office and other victim service providers in urging OVS to overturn its decision and restore this critical funding. They will continue to fight for these needed resources until a positive resolution is reached.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, there is always help. The Crisis Services 24-hour hotline is available at 716-834-3131.

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.