

**INFORMATIONAL HEARING OF THE ASSEMBLY SELECT
COMMITTEE ON STREAMLINING SERVICES FOR VICTIMS
OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE YELLOW HEART COMMITTEE:**

EXAMINING INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**SEPTEMBER 20, 2021 | 11AM
STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 4202**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Timothy Grayson, Chair
Jim Cooper
Jordan Cunningham
Tom Lackey
Eloise Gomez Reyes
Marie Waldron

www.assembly.ca.gov/streamliningservicesforvictims

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September 22, 2021

Members of the Legislature and the People of California:

I am pleased to provide this informational report on the September 20th Informational Hearing of the Select Committee on Streamlining Services for Victims of Interpersonal Violence in conjunction with the Yellow Heart Committee, "Examining Interpersonal Violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic."

The focus of this report is to examine interpersonal violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic. While stay-at-home orders have slowed the spread of COVID-19, they have inadvertently and unfortunately created ideal conditions for interpersonal or intimate partner violence to increase. And as the pandemic has continued on, so too has the abuse. The pandemic created social and livelihood stresses such as income loss, housing instability, and food insecurity, which has exacerbated the silent epidemic of interpersonal violence.

This hearing will put a spotlight on the persistent and growing problem of interpersonal violence and examine the services that are available to victims in California. By examining these issues, I believe that the Legislature can gain important insight into the ways in which the state's current laws are being implemented and ascertain whether changes are necessary to ensure that victims of these crimes are receiving the best support possible.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Members of the Select Committee, the Yellow Heart Committee, and our witnesses for their participation. I appreciate the time and dedication of my colleagues and participants to understand this important issue and their contributions to an insightful discussion during the hearing.

More information on this hearing can be found at assembly.ca.gov/streamliningservicesforvictims and a recording of the hearing can be found at <https://bit.ly/3EGnfrn>. If you have questions or would like additional information about the issues summarized in this report, or if you have questions about the Assembly Select Committee on Streamlining Services for Victims of Interpersonal Violence, please feel free to contact the committee staff at (916)319-2014.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy S. Grayson".

Timothy S. Grayson
Chair, Assembly Select Committee on Streamlining Services for Victims of Interpersonal Violence



SELECT COMMITTEE ON STREAMLINING SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE
INFORMATIONAL HEARING IN COLLABORATION WITH THE YELLOW HEART COMMITTEE:
Examining Interpersonal Violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Monday, September 20, 2021
Time: 11AM
State Capitol, Room 4202

- I. Opening Remarks**
 - Assemblymember Tim Grayson, Chair
 - Assemblymember Jim Cooper

- II. Panel A: Overview of the Interpersonal Violence Crisis Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic**
 - Pedro Nava, Chairman, Little Hoover Commission
 - Honorable Nancy O'Malley, Alameda County District Attorney
 - Michael Redding, Special Assistant Attorney General, California Department of Justice

- III. Panel B: Effective Resources and Current Obstacles for Support: Access to Resources and Meeting Survivor Needs**
 - Walter Hill, Survivor
 - Kaleena Fowler, Survivor
 - William Muetzenberg, Survivor
 - Natalie Oleas, Central Center Director, Contra Costa Family Justice Center
 - Joanna Rosas, SART Director, Project Sister Family Services

- IV. Panel C: Strategies and Recommendations in Response to the Rise in Interpersonal Violence due to the COVID-19 Pandemic**
 - Janna Sidley, Commissioner and Intimate Partner Violence Subcommittee Chair, Little Hoover Commission
 - Vanessa Russel, Founder and Executive Director, Love Never Fails
 - Monica Wilson, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Antioch
 - Krista Colon, Public Policy Director, California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
 - Tina Rosales, Policy Advocate, Western Center on Law and Poverty

- V. Public Comment**

- VI. Closing Statement**

Informational Hearing: Select Committee on Streamlining Services for Victims of Interpersonal Violence

Examining Interpersonal Violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic
Monday, September 20, 2021, 11AM, Room 4202

1. **Hearing Goal.** The goal of this hearing is to provide information to members of the Legislature about the flawed issues in our state's response to interpersonal violence victims. Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, resources for victims have been highly impacted. The pandemic has exacerbated the social and livelihood stresses that can lead to interpersonal violence. In many instances, shelters and other resources were difficult for victims to access leaving some with no option but to stay with abusive partners. Although the state has since improved its access to resources and support programs for victims, it is still lagging behind in preventing the issue of interpersonal violence in California.

Topics that will be discussed during the hearing include:

- An overview of interpersonal violence during the pandemic and how existing resources have been impacted
- How interpersonal/intimate partner violence has become more frequent and/or more severe during the global health crisis
- The different set of factors that are leading to the rise of violence
- Individuals or populations that have become especially vulnerable during COVID-19
- The tactics abusive partners are using to isolate their partner from social support networks
- The resources needed to expand and/or improve your efforts to help survivors of interpersonal/intimate partner violence?
- Barriers that currently exist that limit or impede your efforts to support survivors
- How to encourage individuals who experience IPV to reach out
- How can survivors be better helped? How can we create protective environments?
- How can we disrupt the developmental pathways toward interpersonal/intimate partner violence?
- How can we better develop effective community responses?
- Ways in which the Legislature can assist survivors of interpersonal violence?

The Committee will hear from a variety of survivors, stakeholders, and public officials.

2. **What is interpersonal violence?** Interpersonal violence¹ is characterized by the intentional use of physical force or power against other persons by an individual or small group of individuals. Interpersonal violence may be physical, sexual, or psychological (also called emotional violence), and it may involve deprivation and neglect. Acts of interpersonal violence can be further divided into family or partner violence and community violence.
 - a. *Family or partner violence* refers to violence within the family or between intimate partners. It includes child maltreatment, dating and intimate partner violence (IPV), and elder maltreatment.
 - b. *Community violence* occurs among individuals who are not related by family ties but who may know each other. It includes youth violence, bullying, assault, rape or sexual assault by

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK525208/>

acquaintances or strangers, and violence that occurs in institutional settings such as schools, workplaces, and prisons.

3. Interpersonal/Intimate Partner Violence in California.²

- 34.9 % of California women and 31.1% of California men experience intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner sexual violence and/or intimate partner stalking in their lifetimes.
- In 2018, there were 166,890 domestic violence-related calls to law enforcement; many other incidents went unreported. 46% of reported incidents involved weapons.
- In a single day in 2019, 81% of California domestic violence shelters served 5,644 adults and children. 1,236 requests for services went unmet due to lack of resources.
- In 2018, domestic violence homicides comprised 10.7% of all California homicides. Domestic violence homicides in California increased by 22.2% over 2017.
- A study of women in 67 California domestic violence shelters found that abusive intimate partners used handguns to harm, threaten, or scare 32.1% of study participants; long guns were used to harm, threaten, or scare 15.9% of participants. 39.1% reported that the abusive intimate partner owned a firearm during the relationship, almost twice the rate of gun ownership in California. Of participants in gun-owning households, 64.5% said a gun had been used against them.
- As of December 31, 2019, California had submitted 12,484 domestic violence misdemeanor convictions and ten active domestic violence protective orders to the NICS Index.

4. The COVID-19 Pandemic and Interpersonal/Intimate Partner Violence. The COVID-19 Pandemic has caused significant negative impacts worldwide. In California alone, as of September 30, 2021 there have been over 4.7M total cases and over 69,000 deaths³. In order to slow the spread of COVID-19, quarantines, social isolation, travel restrictions, and stay-at-home orders have been adopted. California's stay-at-home order went into effect March 2020 and has since been lifted as of June 15, 2021, however the state remains in a statewide declaration of emergency.

Interpersonal/Intimate partner violence during isolation is associated with a range of factors including economic stress, increased exposure to exploitative relationships and fewer resources. With the COVID-19 pandemic, people living in volatile environments were forced to stay in their homes. Furthermore, individuals experiencing interpersonal violence who must isolate due to COVID-19 can suffer psychological and economic stressors leading to negative coping mechanisms that can trigger unprecedented violence⁴.

² <https://ncadv.org/state-by-state>

³ <https://covid19.ca.gov/state-dashboard/>

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7264607/>

Witness Biographies

Panel A: Overview of the Interpersonal Violence Crisis Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

Pedro Nava, Chairman, Little Hoover Commission



Mr. Nava served in the California State Assembly from 2004 to 2010. He operates the Law Offices of Pedro Nava. He served on the Little Hoover Commission as an Assemblymember from 2005-2010 and was re-appointed to the Commission by Assembly Speaker Emeritus John Pérez in April 2013 and reappointed by Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon in January 2017 and again in January 2021. Pedro Nava is serving his eight consecutive term as chair of the Little Hoover Commission. He was first elected chair of the Commission on March 27, 2014.

Nancy E. O'Malley, District Attorney, Office of the Alameda County District Attorney



District Attorney Nancy E. O'Malley has served as the chief law enforcement officer in Alameda County since being appointed by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors in September 2009. DA O'Malley is a nationally recognized expert in issues involving violence against women, violence against persons with disabilities, and interpersonal violence including sexual assault, domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse, stalking, and human exploitation and trafficking. She serves in an office with a national reputation for excellence dating back to former District Attorney and United States Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren. DA O'Malley carries out this proud legacy as the first woman to serve as Alameda County's elected District Attorney, and as a leader known throughout California and the country for her innovation and vision.

Michael Redding, Special Assistant Attorney General, California Department of Justice



Michael serves as a legal and policy advisor to Attorney General Rob Bonta on law enforcement, firearms, and criminal justice. He most recently served as the Assistant United States Attorney for the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of California, where he helped organize violence-reduction prosecution strategies with local police departments, task forces, and district attorney's offices, focusing on firearm and gang cases. He also implemented domestic violence prevention efforts as the district coordinator for the Violence Against Women Act and as a member of the Sacramento Domestic Violence Death Review Team. Prior, he served as a Deputy District Attorney in San Mateo County for more than five years, creating a more collaborative domestic violence court in San Mateo. Michael graduated magna cum laude with his bachelor's degree from University of Notre Dame and received his Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School.

Panel B: Effective Resources and Current Obstacles for Support: Access to Resources and Meeting Survivor Needs

Natalie Oleas, J.D, Central Center Director, Family Justice Center



Natalie Oleas, Central Center Director with the Contra Costa Family Justice Center, has worked as a survivor advocate for over a decade. She graduated from Northeastern University School of Law, where her studies centered around victim advocacy, criminal procedure, and civil rights. While living in Massachusetts, she worked as a Legal Consultant for a local Rape Crisis Center. Natalie joined the Family Justice Center team as a Navigator in 2016 after volunteering with the center. She is proud to be the coordinator for several high-risk teams including the Domestic Violence Multidisciplinary Team (DV MDT), the Human Trafficking Multidisciplinary Team (HTMDT), the Domestic Violence Death Review Team, and the Strangulation Task Force. She believes strongly in a holistic approach to justice and healing.

Joanna Rosas, Hotline/SART Director, Project Sister Family Services



Joanna Rosas is the S.A.R.T (sexual assault response team) Director for Project Sister Family Services, the local rape crisis center in Pomona, California. Joanna has been with the agency for 6 years. Part of her work includes supervising the 24 Hotline and all of the volunteer advocates in order to provide crisis intervention and advocacy services for survivors of sexual assault and child abuse. Part of that work includes supporting the most vulnerable and marginalized. Making sure survivors are connected to all of the available resources is her priority and making sure they begin the healing process. Joanna is in her last year of law school and hopes to continue this work as an attorney.

Panel C: Strategies and Recommendations in Response to the Rise in Interpersonal Violence due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Janna Sidley, Commissioner and Intimate Partner Violence Subcommittee Chair, Little Hoover Commission



Ms. Sidley has been general counsel at the Port of Los Angeles since 2013. She served as deputy city attorney at the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office from 2003 to 2013. She was vice president of communications at Pallotta Teamworks in 2002, an assistant United States attorney of the criminal and civil division at the United States Attorney's Office from 1998 to 2002 and deputy director of the violence against women office at the United States Department of Justice from 1997 to 1998. She held several positions at The White House and the United States Department of Interior. She was appointed to the Little Hoover Commission by Governor Edmund Brown Jr. on April 11, 2016.

Vanessa Russel, Founder and Executive Director, Love Never Fails



Vanessa Russell has developed children in the area of dance, teaching hundreds, ages 3-25, lyrical, flags, hip hop, mime, since 2000. In 2010 one of her 15 year old dance students was sold into human trafficking. Although she was eventually located and is now being restored, Vanessa encountered many others who, like her student, were US born women, men and children trapped in modern day slavery. Her response was to launch Love Never Fails, a non-profit dedicated to the restoration, education and protection of those involved or at risk of becoming involved in domestic human trafficking. Love Never Fails has educated thousands of children and community members on the issue of human trafficking, opened a home that provides long-term safe housing and restorative services for over 100 women survivors and their children and launched an IT Academy connecting under-served community members with financially sustainable careers. Vanessa believes that the issue of human trafficking can be solved through love expressed in prayer, safe housing, mentoring, job training, outreach, and education.

Monica Wilson, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Antioch



Monica Wilson is the Mayor Pro Tem of the City of Antioch. She is the first African American woman to serve on the council. She is a past Board Chair of Tri-Delta Transit and currently serves as the Northern California Vice Chair for the California Democratic Party Women's Caucus. Monica was born in Washington, D.C. and grew up in San Rafael, CA. After graduating from Terra Linda High School in 1986, she attended Howard University in Washington, D.C. where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Business/ Merchandising. After graduating from college, she moved to New York City where she managed a women's clothing store in the Upper Westside. Monica earned her MBA in 2005 from the University of Phoenix in Woodland Hills, CA. Monica currently is Senior Program Manager for Love Never Fails, a non-profit that works with survivors of human trafficking.

Krista Colon, Public Policy Director, CA Partnership to End Domestic Violence



Krista Colon is the Public Policy Director for the Partnership where she represents domestic violence programs throughout California at various government agencies, including the California State legislature. Through this advocacy, Krista ensures that the voices of domestic violence programs and survivors are heard and reflected in public policies. Before joining the Partnership, Krista was the Public Policy Coordinator at the National Network to End Domestic Violence, where her work focused on advocating for increases in federal funding for domestic and sexual violence programs and reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act. Previous experiences include working with at-risk youth, which fueled her passion for social policy issues. Krista received her Master's degree in Public Policy with a concentration in Social Policy from American University and received a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from California State University, Long Beach.

Tina Rosales, Policy Advocate, Western Center on Law and Poverty



Kristina "Tina" Rosales is on Western Center's housing team, where she works on housing production for people with low to no income, landlord/tenant law, homelessness, fair housing, and other housing related issues. Tina previously worked for Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, where she worked on landlord/tenant litigation and homelessness issues. She is a member of the State Bar and a graduate of U.C. Hastings College of the Law.

**Panel A: Overview of the Interpersonal Violence Crisis Amid the COVID-19
Pandemic: Written Testimonies**

Pedro Nava, Chairman, Little Hoover Commission



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Chairman Pedro Nava's Testimony to the Assembly Select Committee on Streamlining Services for Victims of Interpersonal Violence

September 20, 2021

Good morning, Mr. Chair and committee members. My name is Pedro Nava and I am the Chairman of the Little Hoover Commission. The Commission is an independent, bipartisan oversight agency charged with making recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of state government.

In the past year we issued two reports examining California's response to intimate partner violence. This horrific abuse can take many forms: physical, sexual, psychological, or financial. It affects Californians of all backgrounds, ages, and gender identities. Tragically, the pandemic has caused already distressing rates of intimate partner violence to climb even higher.

In our report [*Intimate Partner Violence: Getting the Money to Those on the Front Line*](#), we found that rates of intimate partner violence increase during times of stress, particularly economic stress, and when families gather together. COVID-19 social distancing measures combine both. After Governor Newsom issued a statewide shelter-in-place order in March 2020, local officials and shelter staff across California reported significant increases in requests for assistance compared to March 2019. One crisis response shelter in Sacramento reported a 17 percent increase in calls, while one in Los Angeles reported a 20 percent increase. The Fresno County Sheriff's Department reported filing 77 percent more domestic violence-related reports in March 2020 compared to the same time in 2019.

The impact of this violence often falls hardest on the most vulnerable among us – many of whom are bearing the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our report found that families experiencing economic stress are particularly likely to be affected by this abuse, and there is a correlation between male unemployment and rates of domestic violence. Both women and men who are American Indian, black or multiracial report higher rates of intimate partner violence than their peers of other races. Women who live in small rural towns are similarly vulnerable to intimate partner violence and are also more likely to suffer extensive property damage and be murdered by their partner than women in other geographic locations.

Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult for many victims and survivors of this abhorrent abuse to access lifesaving resources. The fear of catching COVID-19 has prevented some victims from seeking emergency medical care in hospitals. And while many health

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Pedro Nava, Chairman	Bill Emmerson	Cathy Schwamberger
Sean Varner, Vice Chairman	Chad Mayes, Assemblymember	Janna Sidley
Dion Aroner	Jim Nielsen, Senator	Ethan Rarick, Executive Director
David Beler	Bill Quirk, Assemblymember	
Cynthia Bulza	Dave Min, Senator	

providers have turned to telehealth as a way to provide socially distanced care to their patients, those living in abusive households can struggle to find the privacy necessary to speak with their doctors or therapists. Accessing help is difficult when abusers isolate their partners from social support networks. Abusers use numerous tactics to prevent their partner from reaching the outside world and the resources that will help them escape.

During our study on intimate partner violence, the Commission heard stories of survivors whose abusers prevented them from leaving the house to go to work or school – places where they could receive help from their friends, coworkers, or teachers. We heard of abusers who take complete control over their family’s resources, meticulously tracking the victim’s use of money and preventing them from accessing funds in a shared bank account. This behavior is common among abusers: one study on survivor financial insecurity found that 100 percent of the survivors in the sample experienced some form of economic abuse during their relationship. When survivors are able to escape their abuser – often with no money and no way to make an income for themselves – they struggle to survive on their own. Some go back to their abuser because they cannot afford to stay away.

Now more than ever, it is critical to ensure that survivors of intimate partner violence have the resources they need not only to escape their abuser but to establish a life on their own. In its report [*Beyond the Crisis: A Long-Term Approach to Reduce, Prevent, and Recover from Intimate Partner Violence*](#), the Commission provides a roadmap for more effectively preventing this abuse, helping survivors, and rehabilitating perpetrators.

First, California must adopt a statewide strategy focused on prevention and early intervention and appoint a leader who will be accountable for progress on this strategy. We need to make help available *before* victims are in crisis.

Second, the state must create and fund prevention and early intervention programs. Antiviolence initiatives – such as batterer intervention programs – must be more accessible and diverse so the state can help more people.

Third, California must increase enforcement of its existing domestic violence-related firearms laws to immediately remove weapons from people prohibited from owning them. The state can better enforce these laws by modernizing the California Department of Justice’s firearms databases and reworking the special agent classification to be more competitive.

And finally, the state must expand, promote, and dedicate funding to resources that help survivors establish financial independence, secure housing, and gain valuable job experience. Such resources include connecting survivors with state apprenticeship programs so they can earn a living while they complete their education; creating stable and sustainable funding streams to expand the Domestic Violence Housing First program; and helping the helpers – the service providers who assist survivors of intimate partner violence – by requiring that state grants provide a living wage and cost-of-living increases to awardees. We must provide support to these service providers so they can continue their crucial work.

Greater action must be taken to ensure California responds rigorously and effectively to the horrific abuse that is intimate partner violence. The Commission's recommendations will help the state create a coordinated, cohesive strategy to prevent this abuse and support survivors with their long-term needs. I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

Nancy E. O'Malley, District Attorney

Office of the Alameda County District Attorney

Thank you very much, Assemblymembers Grayson and Cooper, for having this hearing. I appreciate it, and I just want to take one moment and thank Mr. Nava for all the work that the Little Hoover Commission is doing. I've been working with them on the labor trafficking issues, and we're grateful to have the ability to have that type of think tank really help guide us.

One of the things that I want to talk about interpersonal violence at the time of COVID. And one of the things that has been brought to light is this very, very hidden, pervasive exploitation of individuals on so many levels the very tools that we use to keep people COVID free have now impacted victims of interpersonal violence in the most devastating way. COVID has caused a tremendous amount of stress on families. What we've seen is that someone who might not otherwise be an abuser has become an abuser given the stressors that exist in our society- unemployment, lack of resources, and being confined in the home.

And so there are families that were really ill equipped because there has not been the history of violence. We also see that with the shelter in place, for those that have a violent tendency or have been violent in the past, have only escalated and not only against the adult victim, their partner, but also against children. And one of the issues that we have noticed is what Assemblymember Cooper referenced in that an abuser gets arrested, they're brought to jail, they're booked, and then they're released almost immediately under the emergency bail schedule, without even time for the victim to try to seek resources to move away from that house.

Many, we also found due to COVID, is that victims of interpersonal violence had no access to hospitals. They could go to the hospital, but there were no advocate resources there because they were not allowing other people into the hospital. And for many, the hospital was not even a safe place because hospitals are dealing with covet and so going to the hospital and having at least a mandatory report made to the police, so there could be some follow up. A lot of that was dropping off the wayside because of the conditions that COVID placed on services. Medical services became remote, which can be effective but not for the immediate intervention.

Shelters also had tremendous challenges this year because if a shelter had a positive COVID test, they had to clear out the shelters. So I know in my county they purchase hotels, and our shelter partners were using hotels to be able to house people. But it was not optimal for sure. And hotel rooms nor motel rooms, have kitchens. They don't have a way to get healthy eating or even be able to take care of their kids. I personally saw women who were living in cars with their children who fled their domestic violence. There are so many women that we were able to help out because their only other option was to live in the car that to be away from the violent environment. It was also pointed out by Mr. Nava that the lack of housing of available affordable housing or emergency housing posed great challenges for us, especially what we see which has been exacerbated through COVID is that people that have pets would oftentimes not leave unless they could bring their pet with them because they knew that if they left the pet back, the pet was likely to be killed or abused itself. Certain individuals and populations have become very much more vulnerable because again, everybody was sheltered at home and they were sheltered at home with abusive people.

So then, a lot of the programs that are funded to provide the services also had to go remote. I know that our Family Justice Center, many of our partners worked off site. When COVID began, we closed down for

three days to do a deep clean of the entire facility. But a lot of the services are being done remotely, which is not the same, especially in that critical 24-48 hours after the victim, survivors come forward to talk about what's happened to her/ his circumstances. What we found is that there was people thought that there were no options. And so what we started to do was to create posters, work with the Grocers Association in California and allowed us to give them posters for each county with resource numbers. They were in all the grocery stores. So somebody, either a person who was being abused or someone who knew a person being abused, could know help was out there because there was a great lack of communication during COVID.

Everything was about COVID and everything was about stay-at-home. And we wanted to make sure that people continued to know that there was help available to them. Essentially people became prisoners in their own home. And it was a great big challenge for them being able to seek help. So what we've been doing is that we created our strategy to make sure that we were being not just strategic but comprehensive. So our first strategy was that we needed to let people know there was help and that there was a way to get away from that environment, a violent environment. We tried to engage youth. Also, we worked with Comcast, who became a great partner for us who put commercials and PSAs on. We worked with social media. We worked with radio stations. We just got the word out that help was available. And what we saw was that people started coming to the Justice Center. Now, of course, we're very careful also, because we had staff on site. So we had big, big baskets of masks and hand sanitizer everywhere. Glass put up, the barriers, so that we could actually see people initially and then eventually we could transition them to being helped remotely. The key was to let people know that there was help. When we worked with the grocery stores, what we realized was that we had a lot of shared individuals that were also being serviced by the food bank. So we took those big posters and made them small, and we put them in every single food bank bag. And that's where we've really started to see people who are taking the having the courage to make the phone call or to come and see us. It was also happening in in families that we started seeing an increase, both in the intensity of the violence, much more intense injury. Hospitals were calling us at the Justice Center, asking us to have more immediate help, that we saw law enforcement supporting stronger and more severe injuries. And we saw we reminded ourselves that people who have means had the ability to leave if they could psychologically, but they had the ability to go to a hotel or go stay with family or friends. We were really focusing on people that didn't have that option.

We also, in addition to our PSAs and our outreaches, we talked to children. We talked to children about the dangers of and how they could tell someone if something or somebody was hurting them. I know here in Sacramento, the school district had banners on the screens for the kids that were in school remotely saying, if someone's hurting you, you can call someone, you can call the number. And then we worked with teachers who are online with the kids so that they could pay attention if they were seeing something that was out of sorts.

As I said, because of COVID instead of the shelters, we started using hotel rooms. And we were very close to purchasing a 90 room hotel that had six floors that we were going to convert into safe housing for women and children. But that didn't work out. But so far since COVID has started in the last year, we've housed over 600 women, both through emergency housing, and some having to go into hotel rooms. We've had the pivot to have food on site to give them food that can be cooked in a microwave, because again, we assume here you're safe in the room. But how are you going to eat? And how are you going to feed your children? So we buy food and our food bank to try to make sure that we've got food that is accessible for during hotel rooms. We also have a strategy of moving people away from their home base, so they'll be out in the east part of our county as opposed to north part of the county, and vice versa. We

work with partners then to find permanent housing, and we've been relatively successful in finding more permanent housing. But the resources aren't there for victim survivors to support themselves. And that is a huge issue, as I like what the recommendation was from the Little Hoover Commission to have a domestic violence first housing initiatives so that people at least have a way to get into living. I know that through the victims of crime that they're able to pay a certain amount of rent for someone who's had to be emergency relocated. And we utilize all of those services for victims. But the key is making sure that victims know that that's available for us.

At the end of the day. COVID has given us the opportunity to really give more focus to empowering victims because we can help them by responding. We can help them with an issue resources. We can do a lot of that, but our goal is to make sure that that victim survivor walks away, being able to take care of herself and her children. At the Justice Center. We have a food hub. We thought that we'd be giving out food as food as medicine, which is a great initiative of Alameda County. It's not just go get your medicine for your diabetes but also go get your fresh vegetables so that you can use food as medicine as well. It didn't quite work out. So now we have gift cards that we give people when they come for any session. We give them gift cards to different places. Target, I have to say, has been an incredible partner to us and helping provide resources to us so that we can provide them to the victim and the clients.

Under Family Justice Center, survivors also have a chance to participate with ongoing health classes and now we are talking about how to shop economically, how to make food. We have cooking classes online. We provide them with supplies. We engage with the trades with the unions. We now have over 150 women who have been able to become code writers because of one of our partnerships. We have women that are now carpenters and electricians and are in apprenticeship programs. And these are all ways that we're helping to end that cycle of violence because they will be able to take care of themselves and not be dependent on a person who's abusing them. We also were able to through grants that we received, were able to provide Chromebooks for those who are working with us and others. I mean, for many of the families, they didn't have technology, they didn't have computers, so we were able to provide those. And I will say that thankfully, because we've gotten all these grants, we've been able to do much more in terms of providing support and resources with the children. We did continue our Camp Hope, but we did in our parking lot instead of away at camp. Although this summer we did have away at camps.

One of the biggest challenges was that the courts closed, and it was almost impossible to get a protective order, especially an emergency protective order. When the courts close down, that or they were became remote. If you didn't have technology, you could not if you didn't know how to do it. So that's been a huge problem for us. Also, with trying to process domestic violence cases through court is a huge issue, and the courts are now starting to open back up. But of course, they are big challenges with COVID who can actually come into a courtroom. How can they do it? At the Justice Center, we've set up a system where they can come there and we can help them get their emergency orders and then help them. One of our partners helps them in the courtroom. We send our navigators to be with people in court or at least online in court. We want the survivors to come out of this experience empowered and stronger. And I think that that's one of the areas where we just really have given focus where there's not a lot of discussion about what happens after they get out of that experience.

Our program is called Step Up, which is about financial literacy and other awareness programs. We have a partnership where women are learning how to take care of their own needs. They can change electrical outlets, they can fix their own cars. It's quite amazing what they're doing. We've got how to shop smart. We have working with dig deep farms where women are learning how to grow their own food, and especially we've been engaging the children with homework helper. It is impossible for many of these young kids who have actually gotten an education by a computer screen. And we are so concerned that these

children have missed a year plus of education, which we know that that puts them already at a disadvantage as they grow into adulthood.

We are a trauma recovery center as well, and that we have a PhD and five therapists who work at the Trauma Recovery Center. Some of those are being done remotely quite effectively. We've had 750 people that we've served in the last year at the Justice Center. 10,000 clients have come to just since January, which is substantially more than we've had in the past. And I believe that that is in large part due to both the immediate response as well as the ongoing support that we're providing to women and children and any and men. We serve about a thousand men a year who are themselves victims of domestic violence.

Lastly, we're talking about interpersonal violence, but I'd also like to shine a light on a huge increase in human trafficking violence. We looked at online ads for 124 hours period in my community, and there were 1135 ads selling women and girls for sex. We could narrow that down to a separate women. And our analytics told us that at least were under the age of 20, and there's so much violence on the street, both from traffickers who are trying to control the victim from purchasers, who are doing this. And it's so frightening that this is all still happening in the time of COVID, which makes all of these individuals so incredibly vulnerable. And we're seeing more violence between the trafficked individuals. So there's so much that we're doing now out on the street and trying to bring these resources to traffic to victims. We're trying a lot of different initiatives. We have a partnership of 20 partner agencies just trying to address the violence of traffic, individuals who are on the streets or on the Internet in at least Alameda County and beyond. You know, anything that we can do to further either from a policy standpoint or from any other standpoint. We're always stand ready to help.

And I thank you for your time.

**Michael Redding, Special Assistant Attorney General,
California Department of Justice**

Mr. Chair and members, my name is Michael Redding and I am a Special Assistant Attorney General with the California Department of Justice. On behalf of Attorney General Rob Bonta, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important topic. Prior to joining the California Department of Justice, I was a prosecutor for eight years; I spent many of those years working on Domestic Violence-related cases; this is an important topic that is very near and dear to my heart.

Like the other organizations represented here today, the Department is committed to doing everything in its power to protect the victims of intimate partner violence. The Attorney General recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic presented significant and unique challenges to victims of interpersonal violence. Likewise, it affected law enforcement, prosecutors, and the Courts, often hampering their ability to investigate cases and move these cases quickly through the system. Given that these are ongoing problems that victims continue to experience every day, the Attorney General is dedicated to ensuring the Department can help in whatever capacity possible.

The Criminal Justice Statistics Center—or, CJSC—collects and reports statistical data to allow for assessments of crime and criminal justice in California. This data is available through the Attorney General's OpenJustice website. The DOJ Research Center—or, DOJRC—is the analytical side of the house. DOJRC uses a scientific approach to, among other areas, data analysis, aiming to empower the department and law enforcement more generally to make data-driven decisions.

CJSC and DOJRC provided the data I have to offer today. The first table is based on data collected by CJSC, and the Automated Criminal History System (ACHS), showing the number of domestic violence-related calls, arrests, and convictions each year from 2015 through 2020 – the 2021 data is still being compiled. The total calls data was originally released in the Crime in CA Publication the AG released in July. It's worth noting that, as the data is based on reporting from local entities, it could be incomplete.

As you can see on this slide, 2020 saw the biggest year-to-year drop in calls, arrests and convictions, as compared with the year-to-year data of the preceding five years. Furthermore, if we compare the average of the five years preceding 2020 to 2020 itself, reported calls decreased by 2.9%, reported arrests decreased by 13.6%, and reported convictions decreased by 37.2%. While some of the drop could be explained by fewer actual arrests and convictions, delays in reporting data to the DOJ likely also contribute to the reduced numbers.

The second slide was compiled by DOJRC. It is based on data from the ACHS providing arrest data, which is required to be provided to us – when someone is arrested and booked on a particular charge, the data is sent to us. That's why we have data through August of 2021 here. This chart shows available data on arrests by month from 2015 through August 2021. Just looking at January and February, arrests stayed about the same between 2019 and 2020—pre-pandemic. There were between 10,200 and 10,700 arrests each year, and 10,453 in 2020 – right in the middle. Same with February – the number of arrests averaged in the high 9,000s and low 10,000s – February 2020 came in at 9,869.

However, starting in March, we started to see a notable drop. The first full month of the pandemic—April 2020—saw a decrease in arrests from about 10 or 11,000 a month to 8,470. That trend continued throughout the rest of 2020 and into 2021. The number of arrests per month in 2021 is closer to the pandemic months of 2020 than any preceding year.

Of course, data does not and cannot tell the whole story. It does not tell the stories of individual victims; these victims are not numbers and their lived experiences cannot be represented merely through charts. Likewise, it does not tell the full story of the pandemic—we know from studies, stories, and having been there that closed courts, delayed reporting to DOJ, and changes in local data systems may account for the declines we see in the 2020 data. To explain the data, we need the help of victims, advocates, law enforcement, and experts in this field. Fortunately this room and this panel has plenty of those. I look forward to hearing from them and hope that, together, we can work to address these issues. Thank you for the opportunity to share this information with you today. On behalf of the Attorney General of California, we look forward to working with you, our partners, to face these challenges head-on.

Panel B: Effective Resources and Current Obstacles for Support: Access to Resources and Meeting Survivor Needs: Written Testimonies

Walter Hill

Good afternoon. My name is Walter Hill. I'm a College student at Illinois State University. I'm taking classes online, but I'm here today to speak on the resources and obstacles for support for survivors.

COVID-19 has impacted the resources to victims and survivors and personally, for me, during this lockdown in Chicago, mobility has been a struggle with continuing with your life with regards to almost anything.

I've personally experienced homelessness due to COVID-19 and without having the right support system, I was incarcerated in May of 2019, April 2020 and in the beginning of 2020, which was when COVID began. It pretty much was just a hassle on how to survive being incarcerated during this pandemic, we weren't getting the right treatment. We weren't able to see our families. Everything was just pretty much taken away from us and jump back into society has been the main obstacle for me.

Pretty much our resources has been scattered and it's been hard to move on, move forward without the right support system and COVID-19 has been a cherry on the top, but I've still been moving forward and my best effort and utilizing resources such as self-care, shelter, employment. Those main three have become more critical during this pandemic and not only have the service providers experience crisis call during this time, they also become more responsible for being providing immediate attention to those with no sense of direction. Resources such as anger management, counseling, therapy. Those have then the main ones that need to be back intact to help with the mental issues going on recalling COVID-19.

So the main thing is communication. I feel like it's the main key that would help the people that in my predicament overcome these obstacles because I haven't been able to communicate right with anyone because everything is just locked down everywhere you go. You have to have a mask, you have to have certain credentials to do certain things. And if you don't have those credentials, you're pretty much on your own. I just feel like communicating, and that's the main thing to help getting past these during this pandemic.

Kaleena Fowler

Hello. My name is Kaleena Fowler, and I'm currently a senior attending College Park High School in Pleasant Hill. I'm honored to be selected to speak on behalf of the students regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their mental health. I enjoy navigating for the community, hence why I am an active member and the Boys and Girls Club of Martinez, as well as I'm the President of my Schools Black Student Union. I have created a close knit community with the help of my club leaders. We advocate for social justice, equality and equity in the black community. Not only has the Black Student Union open up so many opportunities for me, but it helped me inspired to give back to the community immensely. I'm a member of many clubs, such as Be the Change, Rotary and Environmental Club. Furthermore, I am my school student board member. My duty is to represent and speak on behalf of students as well as to make sure their desires are brought to life. After high school, I plan to go straight to a four year College and study political science or public policy following law school. My ultimate goal of life is to always advocate for voices in need.

I believe COVID-19, has immensely impacted the resources available for victims and survivors. More specifically, students. From my perspective, people are either excel the distance learning or completely fell apart. Not having the hands on resources to grow in school plummeted the mental health of students to turn their life upside down, leading to depression, to fed rates, going up, loss of sleep and appetite. Feeling isolated alone, I was fortunate enough to have the ability of time management and was able to survive in disconcerting as well as my great family who helped me regarding resources. Some of my teachers are not very accommodating to students, for example, giving pop quizzes, not being able to turn in late work. The lack of understanding that they have was terrible. On the other hand, other teachers were very accommodating, they office hours help us come they let us retake tests. They understood how hard it was in this life of chaos. I believe the use of technology really benefited the students more specifically Zoom. I'm not sure how we would have learned without Zoom and I'm really grateful for that. Learning through screen was immensely difficult, but the teachers some were accommodating have office hours and having visuals and posting their lectures to look back on was very appreciative as well as cell phone communications with friends. I feel helped to keep us in touch with our humanity. I gave us a touch of the real world while the while the world was in chaos, I believe service provided such as Zoom, we're greatly excuse me.

I believe service providers such as some have experienced more crisis calls during this time. Some help with tutoring online textbooks. Our mental has greatly benefited from it. The communication was amazing. It provided us with the sense of realism. I believe counselors and psychologists there's extreme shortage in my district. Teachers need to be more understanding and accommodating to students. Understand planning a lesson via Zoom is beyond challenging by having pop quizzes, not being able to run in late work and having finals is just unjust. The workload during distance learning was tremendous and impossible for many students to keep up with, including myself. I believe the barriers existed that limited our efforts to support survivors for communication.

Communication is key when supporting survivors and the best way to reach out to students in my district. We do have a lot of resources, but a lot of people are not educated about them. For instance, our school ID cards do have the they do have the national suicide prevented hotline the district out service side Hotline in the Crisis hotline as well as social media is a great way to spread the information for those in need. I've done my research on Instagram. There are some accounts such as Mental Health America. Let's talk mental health and Navigating for mental health as well as Twitter, the Psych Central rethink and non-stigmas. I believe social media really helps students in need. It was a sense that we're all there and connected going through the same thing and I was really grateful to be able to have it during this time.

William Muetzenberg

Good afternoon, Chair Grayson and members of the Select Committee. My name is William Muetzenberg. I'm a proud resident of Tracy and a former City Council candidate, and a proud Korean American. Thank you to the Committee for organizing this hearing and allowing individuals such as myself to speak on the interpersonal violence that has been happening during this pandemic and how it's impacted us.

When the world shut down 18 months ago due to COVID-19. I never could have imagined the hate of vitriol that would be directed at Asian Americans. It seemed like day after day. You see on Twitter, TikTok Instagram and cable television stories of people of Asian descent being attacked. They weren't doing anything, they weren't hurting anyone. But that didn't stop individuals from believing that they had a right to hurt them.

Earlier this year, I witnessed a video of an elderly Chinese woman who had been attacked in San Francisco. She had a large purple bruise over her eye and was crying while her assailant was receiving medical attention. The cries I heard in that video struck me. I immediately thought of my grandmother, a Korean American immigrant, and now in her Eighties, and I couldn't bear imagining her walking down the street or coming out of Church to be attacked simply because someone saw her Asian features when shooting in Atlanta, when the shooting in the Atlanta suburbs happened again, had a similar response. This time I thought of my mom. Those salons where the shooting occurred were run or operated by women of Asian descent, who knows if another shooting or another attack could occur in similar locations at an Asian supermarket, at an Asian restaurant, to have to live in fear that something terrible could happen to my family or myself simply because we look different or that we had something to do with COVID-19 is traumatic.

In the wake of that shooting, I helped organize a vigil with fellow advocates in my hometown of Tracy to recognize the violence being perpetrated against people of Asian descent. We had a showing of nearly 50 people and including some of our members of our city Council, intendents to show that we would stand up to access these acts of violence. And then we also saw the shooting at the VTA center in San Jose were two residents of San Joaquin County lost their lives, including a sick man from Tracy. While the VTA incident may not be classified a hate crime. When I heard this, me and many others immediately thought of on a sick man was murdered in Tracy at one of our parks two years ago. I came out to support our community, mourning the loss of one of our own, and heard from leaders from elected officials to community leaders on the need to do something to address the rising violence.

The trauma we face as individuals as a result of interpersonal violence is also felt as a community. We live in a connected world where we see and experience what our friends and families and even strangers share. We no longer can ignore that the world is in siloed, but we and that the trauma one community experiences in one part of the world can ricochet in tsunami into our room. We have been ill equipped to handle the impacts these traumatic events have on us. We often focus on how to provide resources to young people in these events. But even after you turn 18, traumatic events still impact us.

At the vigil honoring the lives of the San Jose shooting, we had elected officials come up and speak on how these incidents need to stop. But I believe there was an absence in the resources we can turn to to handle how we feel and how these events impact us, especially in this world impacted by COVID-19. I'm grateful for this conversation that we're starting on how interpersonal violence affects us and our communities. While the testimony I share work today reflects my personal experiences, I recognize that there are so many people out there like me who have been affected by what we've witnessed and experienced, and it is my hope that we can streamline and make it easier to access resources so that we can heal from these wounds for our mental health.

Natalie Oleas, J.D, Central Center Director, Family Justice Center

Good morning. My name is Natalie Oleas and I am the Central Center Director for the Contra Costa Family Justice Center. The Family Justice Center is a one-stop Center for survivors of interpersonal violence. This includes domestic violence, sexual assault, elder and child abuse and human trafficking.

I'd like you to imagine something with me for a moment. I'd like you to imagine a woman. Her name is Hannah. Hannah has two young children with her boyfriend Fred and they all live together in a two bedroom apartment in Contra Costa County. Hannah works at a local restaurant making minimum wage. Fred is unemployed. They have had a rocky relationship history, but have never gotten into any physical altercations. Can you picture this family?

Now, imagine it's March 2020 and the pandemic hits. Everything gets shut down. The restaurant where Hannah works, the school where the kids go, everything. Over the course of the first few weeks of the shelter-in-place, Hannah and Fred get more and more stressed. She isn't working, Fred isn't working and the kids are home with them all the time in their tiny apartment.

From the stress of the situation, Fred becomes physically abusive towards Hannah. The children are witnessing the abuse because they are home all the time. In early April, Hannah decides she and the kids are no longer safe in their home and she tries to reach out to the court to get help in filing a restraining order. But the court is shut down to the public.

She tries calling a few other community-based organizations as she wants to meet with an advocate, but most services are being offered remotely and she doesn't have a safe place to have a phone conversation. Hannah's situation feels helpless.

When the pandemic hit, the Family Justice Center made the decision to remain open to the public for clients like Hannah. The pandemic exacerbated the abuse Hannah experienced and it was more challenging for her to access resources. Officials were telling the community to shelter-in-place, but how can you do that when home is not a safe place for you?

In the last 10 years, the Contra Costa Family Justice Center has grown into 3 locations across Contra Costa County with more than 60 partners working on site.

That is the key to getting through this pandemic and getting survivors the help they need – collaboration between community agencies. A public – private partnership where all involved are working towards one goal – reducing interpersonal violence.

COVID has negatively impacted both our clients and the organizations that provide services for survivors. In 2020, the Family Justice Center saw an increase in clients by 14%. We saw an increase in severity of the abuse they were experiencing. 86% of our clients are women. 70% of our clients have children and earn less than \$2,000/month. Over 65% are BIPOC.

Their most critical needs throughout the pandemic have been restraining order assistance, mental health counseling support and housing.

Since March 2020, our Lawyers for Family Justice Program has assisted 160 clients with restraining orders. We have connected 669 clients to mental health supportive services. Agencies working with survivors need the resources available to run programs like these. They are essential for the health and safety of survivors.

Thanks to Assemblymember Tim Grayson's efforts, Family Justice Centers across California will be receiving much needed funding next year to support these critical services.

The pandemic has impacted interpersonal violence survivors in ways we could not imagine. We must remember that interpersonal violence is a public health issue. When violence happens within the home, it impacts every sector: the healthcare industry, the legal system, education.

It is critical for California to continue to support agencies that serve interpersonal violence survivors through funding and advocacy measures. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the work we have done with interpersonal violence survivors throughout the pandemic and hope to collaborate more closely with our state representatives in the future.

Joanna Rosas, Hotline/SART Director, Project Sister Family Services

Hello everyone, my name is Joanna Rosas, and I am the SART Director for Project Sister Family Services (PFPS). We are the local rape crisis center in Pomona, CA. We serve part of Los Angeles and San Bernardino County.

A majority of the survivors we serve come from vulnerable and marginalized communities. That often includes young children, women, LGBTQI+ survivors and undocumented survivors.

Survivors have always had a difficult time reporting and disclosing their abuse but because of COVID 19 survivors have had an even more difficult time accessing resources and support. I'm happy to say that PSFS has not stopped providing in person advocacy to survivors when they report to law enforcement, receive a forensic medical exam, and go to court or any part of their criminal investigation.

With that being said we have teamed up with forensic nurse specialist to help provide in person support to survivors during their forensic medical exam even if they are not in our service area in order to make sure someone is there for them. Having an advocate at a forensic medical exam is crucial. It's the first step in healing and having an advocate there to help guide a survivor is essential.

Even with the he the difficulties COVID-19 has presented and less advocates volunteer in person PSFS has maneuvered such difficult time to provide services. Our Outreach department have found innovative ways to present to our communities about sexual assault and resources to let them know that even in these difficult and uncertain times, help is available.

Now more than ever funding is extremely important in order to continue these essential services and be there for survivors with all the resources needed.

Panel C: Strategies and Recommendations in Response to the Rise in Interpersonal Violence due to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Written Testimonies

Janna Sidley, Commissioner and Intimate Partner Violence Subcommittee Chair,
Little Hoover Commission



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**Commissioner Janna Sidley’s Testimony to the Assembly Select Committee on Streamlining
Services for Victims of Interpersonal Violence**

September 20, 2021

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and committee members. My name is Janna Sidley and I am the chair of the Little Hoover Commission’s intimate partner violence subcommittee. The Commission is an independent oversight agency responsible for investigating state operations and making recommendations to the Governor and Legislature to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of state government.

The Commission issued two reports in the past year examining the state’s response to intimate partner violence. Tragically, this abhorrent abuse is a common experience for many Californians. One third of women and one quarter of men in California will experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Rates are even higher for people of color and those who are transgender. The effects of this horrific violence follow victims for the rest of their lives: abused people experience physical and mental health disorders at higher rates than their non-abused peers; younger survivors are more likely to drop out of school; and many face crippling amounts of debt from credit cards and loans unknowingly taken out in their name by their abuser. Despite the harsh toll intimate partner violence takes on its victims, many survivors struggle to access the services and care they desperately need to escape their abuser and establish a life on their own.

In our report [*Beyond the Crisis: A Long-Term Approach to Reduce, Prevent, and Recover from Intimate Partner Violence*](#), we identified several barriers that prevent help from reaching individuals affected by this heinous abuse.

First, California’s response to intimate partner violence is administratively fragmented. There are dozens of state agencies that address various aspects of this crime, but there is no single agency or person responsible for California’s progress or lack thereof on reducing and preventing it. This siloed approach creates critical gaps in the state’s efforts to prevent this abuse – and victims pay the price.

Second, California focuses overwhelmingly on crisis intervention which means help is often too little, too late. Existing rehabilitation programs are not accessible to everyone. Batterer intervention programs, which convicted abusers must participate in as a condition of their probation, are neither widely available nor diverse. Participants who live in rural areas or speak a language other than English do not have many options available to find a suitable program.

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Pedro Nava, Chairman	Bill Emmerson	Cathy Schwamberger
Sean Varner, Vice Chairman	Chad Mayes, Assemblymember	Janna Sidley
Dion Aroner	Jim Nielsen, Senator	Ethan Rarick, Executive Director
David Beler	Bill Quirk, Assemblymember	
Cynthia Bulza	Dave Min, Senator	

And since no taxpayer funds can be used for these programs, participants must pay for the program themselves based on an income-based sliding scale. The \$100 to nearly \$200 cost per month for classes puts a strain on low-income families. Those who cannot pay and miss too many classes can be arrested and spend 10 to 30 days in jail for violating probation, often losing their job and accruing more fees in the process.

Third, California's gun laws – which are designed to immediately remove firearms from abusers – lack enforcement. Decades-old databases used by the California Department of Justice to track individuals prohibited from owning guns are unable to automatically cross-reference each other and alert agents to potential owners who may no longer be eligible to own weapons. To make matters worse, the DOJ faces a critical shortage of special agents to carry out the dangerous work of locating and retrieving weapons. Innocent lives are at stake: a woman is five times more likely to be killed by her abusive partner if he has access to a firearm than if he does not.

Lastly, a lack of long-term support for survivors makes it difficult for them to establish a life on their own. Economic independence is the key for survivors to be able to successfully leave an abusive relationship, but sadly, many simply cannot afford to stay away from their abuser. Survivors often do not have access to their own bank accounts or vital documents that they need to travel or secure a job, housing, or financial aid. Current state resources are not as helpful to survivors as they should be. While the Victim Compensation Board reimburses crime victims for direct expenses related to the crime, many survivors do not have the funds available to first pay for the services for which they would eventually be reimbursed. And emergency housing assistance – while crucial – is not enough to help survivors of intimate partner violence achieve long-term stability.

Victims and survivors of intimate partner violence can be better helped if California acts now to overcome these barriers. In its report, the Commission outlined key steps the state can take now to do just that.

California must first transform its response to intimate partner violence from a focus on crisis intervention to one of prevention and early intervention. While crisis intervention is a critical aspect of responding to intimate partner violence, it cannot be pursued alone. The state must also focus on prevention and early intervention services to make help available *before* the crisis arrives. Further, the Governor and Legislature must appoint a leader who will not only “own” the issue area of intimate partner violence but will also steer the state toward this new approach.

The Legislature must also ensure the creation and funding of prevention and early intervention programs. These initiatives should be included in all applicable statewide strategic plans ranging from early childhood education to reducing homelessness. Existing rehabilitation programs, such as batterer intervention programs, should be evaluated on whether they are actually facilitating rehabilitation or not.

Next, the Legislature must fully enforce the state's firearms laws. Speeding up IT modernization at the California Department of Justice and bolstering recruitment and retention of special agents will make this a reality.

Finally, resources that help survivors establish financial independence must be expanded and promoted. This includes creating a one-stop shop where survivors can receive copies of their vital records as well as information on how to recover from and prevent identity theft; transitioning the Victim Compensation Board's model for state funds from one of reimbursement to real-time payments; and advertising housing assistance available to survivors more fully and adjusting it to be more flexible for survivors' needs.

These recommendations, once implemented, will help California create a holistic, strategic, and collaborative approach to combat intimate partner violence and help its survivors thrive on their own. I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

Vanessa Russel, Founder and Executive Director, Love Never Fails

Good afternoon, Chairman Grayson and Assembly Member Cooper and the Yellow Heart Leadership Team. Thank you so much for the opportunity to raise awareness about the experience of survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence.

I'm the founder of Love Never Fails, an anti-trafficking organization that's been in place for ten years. We've provided housing for 172 women, men and children, and we also have a state certified cyber security and networking pre apprenticeship program for human trafficking survivors and other vulnerable populations.

During the Pandemic, we trained over 300 students using our IT curriculum and our students are 56% women and 68% black and Latino. I should also mention I'm also the co-chair of Oakland's Violence Prevention Coalition Gender Based Violence Committee and also a professor at Computer Science and Information Systems Management to colleges in Oakland and very adamant about working with victims of interpersonal violence, gender based violence, and providing them access to sustainable careers in the IT world. We believe that the lack of housing, sustainable career opportunities, and mental health supportive services are the greatest barriers that we have and the services that are needed to overcome and prevent and intervene in the lives of human trafficking survivors and domestic violence survivors.

A quick story- in May of 2020, I received a call from Vallejo PD letting me know that they had a 15 year old. It was a rainy night, Sunday night, midnight. They had a 15 year old and they didn't know where to take her. She had been trafficked out of cars for six months, and there she was and needed somewhere to go. I went to go pick her up, and I started calling around to my contacts during the middle of the Pandemic and started calling the places that previously were able to receive children that I had looked to as a partner in this difficult situation, and unfortunately, they had all closed. And so I found myself in a really hard place. Fortunately, I was able to get in touch with the district attorney and also with a youth shelter in Alameda County, and they were able to house for 90 days. Usually it's a 21 day hold, but for, uh, homeless youth, but it had been extended to 90 days during the endemic. As I looked around just around the state after we replaced her, I was looking for places that she could go that were long term and again could not find any places for a trafficked girl to go. And that was then when we made the plans to open our home in August of 2020 for girls ages 13 to 17.

And this place, this home that we've opened, we've been able to house five girls and provide them safety and a place where healing and also a place where their parents can receive counseling and reunification support. And the reason I bring this up is we have noticed an extreme shortage of housing for adults or for LGBTQ plus community members, for men and for girls and for boys that are impacted by gender based violence, impacted by human trafficking and domestic violence. And this girl was just one of many that would have been turned, perhaps right back out on the street if a parent didn't pick them up, or perhaps maybe a parent would come. But a parent who was living in poverty, a parent who was traumatized, a parent who is ill equipped to deal with a child that had been sexually traumatized in that way.

And so we believe again, some early intervention isn't much needed as we go forward and look at the impacts of things like the pandemic and just in general, finding ways to house to provide mental health services and work workforce development for these vulnerable populations is key to preventing the extension of gender based violence, of human trafficking and of domestic violence.

I also want to highlight very quickly I want to thank both Chairperson Grayson and Assembly Member Cooper for Abstaining and or opposing for SB 357, which is an attempt to decriminalize layering for prostitution across the state. I want to thank you because it's clear that you're listening to survivors of

human trafficking who are saying that legislation like this, that seems to be a positive thing for victims is actually going to be quite detrimental to them, because, on one hand, survivors want to see the decriminalization of human trafficking because they are victims. They don't want to be criminalized. But bills like this decriminalized the crime for buyers and for exploiters. And so that's something we're very adamant about kind of advocating against. We also want to see bills like this come coupled with providing services like the housing, like the mental health services, like the workforce development services that we offer and many other nonprofits and advocates offer. We need to make sure that those services are offered as reasonable exit services from human trafficking. If there's even a position of removing law enforcement or removing the current protection gates that are in place, there needs to be an alternative put in place, and so very adamant that as we look at not only the services landscape, but we look at the political policy landscape that we keep the survivor voice front and center. And I'm so grateful that you had some survivors on earlier today prioritizing their feeling, their thoughts, and their needs.

And lastly, I will say that during the pandemic, we have seen an uptick in the use of technology for exploiting children. I believe I heard District Attorney Nancy O'Malley cite that there were those 135 ads where she and her team had observed that 70% of whom were of ads of people that were under the age of 20. We know that technology is being used in a very positive way, as was mentioned earlier to close the digital divide. And we just want to make sure that there are certain safety precautions put in place with technology such as what we're seeing coming up here very quickly with the only fans online platform, which is being used to traffic children and vulnerable individuals, that those types of platforms be monitored, carefully managed, and that the online world as we bring more children on to the online world, and we bring more vulnerable people on there that they're not preyed upon, that they have the proper training, and that there's a proper safe protocols in place to make sure that the digital world is a safe place for them as well.

So thank you so much for the opportunity again to advocate on behalf of survivors. And thanks for this time.

Monica Wilson, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Antioch

Thank you, Chairperson Grayson. My name is Monica Wilson, and I'm the Mayor Pro Tem of one of the largest cities in Contra Costa County, the city of Antioch. Thank you for allowing me the space to testify and provide a voice for those in our community that feel that they are not heard.

By being here today, we are letting survivors know that they matter and that they are not alone. Throughout my career in public service, I have devoted myself to the vocation of providing support to survivors of both domestic and sexual violence.

For many of us, the idea of being an abusive partner makes absolutely being with an abusive partner makes absolutely no sense. We find ourselves asking why they stay, if only that were true, and that simple. However, the reason that many survivors remain silent and in the shadows for long periods of time is because the abuse isn't just physical is also emotional. It is through that emotional abuse that abuser can create a cage by which the victim feels that she or he cannot escape.

Through my work, I have learned that the key to getting a survivor to lead their situation is creating a support system around them that gives them the confidence that they will be protected once they leave their situation. And I protected. I do not just mean moral support. I mean long term housing, which seems to be a constant coming up throughout today, learning skills to be able to sustain themselves and their children to obtain careers that pay a livable wage, legal support and counseling to help survivors rehabilitate their inner self.

And through that rehabilitation, begin the process of regaining their voice. You can arrest an abuser every single time, but it will not change anything because the moment the abuser is released, they will rely on the mental hold they have on the victim to regain control over that person's life by breaking the mental hold. We can break the entire cycle and allow victims the confidence they need to break away and thrive.

I thank you for allowing me to testify today.

Krista Colon, Public Policy Director, CA Partnership to End Domestic Violence



Testimony by Krista Colón California Partnership to End Domestic Violence Strategies and Recommendations in Response to the Rise in Interpersonal Violence due to the COVID-19 Pandemic September 20, 2021

Good afternoon Chairman Grayson, Assemblymember Cooper, and attendees today. Thank you for holding this important hearing, and for providing me with the opportunity to speak. My name is Krista Colón, and I'm the Public Policy Director with the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence.

As the statewide domestic violence coalition, we work closely with the domestic violence service providers across the state of California. We have heard from them throughout these 18 months about the challenges in serving survivors while navigating through unprecedented times. The dedicated domestic violence advocates and preventionists were the very definition of an essential workforce – the lifesaving support they provide has never stopped, and for many advocates the in-person nature of their work has continued, despite risks to their own health and safety.

Before I turn to a focus on strategies and recommendations for how we respond to the rise in domestic violence due to COVID, I want to do a bit of grounding. The sad reality is that domestic violence was at epidemic rates in California long before COVID emerged, and without significant changes, it will remain so long after these days of COVID have receded in our memory. When the first Shelter in Place orders went into effect last year, many folks came to realize that home may not be safe for everyone. But that lack of safety had been present well before COVID came on the scene.

Nationally, more than 1 in 3 women have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime. In FY 2019-20, domestic violence programs in California answered 215,187 hotline calls, provided 622,646 bed nights for victims and their children. In 2020, California law enforcement agencies received 160,646 domestic violence related calls, 72,628 of which included a weapon. **On just one day in 2020**, 5,591 survivors received services, and there were 984 unmet requests for services. 65% of unmet requests were for housing or emergency shelter.

COVID has exacerbated and highlighted many disparities in our society as well as many specific needs for survivors and the urgent need for prevention. As such, many of my recommendations here are recommendations I would have made to you even without a global pandemic, although the imperative for action has now been heightened.

Recommendations:

As a very fundamental recommendation on how the legislature, and the state as a whole can respond to the rise in domestic violence due to COVID, we must recognize that survivors, their children, and the programs that serve them will be feeling the impacts of COVID long after any general sense of the pandemic being over. Service providers are already seeing increased demand for their services. As statewide COVID restrictions were removed in June, one domestic violence program reported conducting as many intakes in one week as they would usually do in a full month. This is just one example but is indicative of the strain programs are experiencing in meeting the pent-up need in their communities.

The trauma survivors have incurred will not be easily healed, the new ways of operating and providing services will take time and resources to institutionalize and sustain, and the burnout and secondary trauma for a field of advocates and preventionists is not easily undone. Resources will need to continue to support the long-term work.

Housing and Homelessness

One core area of need for survivors is to address the issues of housing and homelessness, and how these systems respond to and support survivors – and how they don't. Although domestic violence is the leading cause of women's homelessness, the state's conversation about homelessness rarely reflects the experiences of homeless women, and even less frequently a discussion of domestic violence. Conversations about domestic violence & housing primarily occur in a victim services space – and even within the legislature, these topics most often appear in separate committees.

Domestic violence shelters, which by definition are homeless service providers, consistently speak of having to fight tooth and nail at their local levels to secure any funding for their operations through our homeless funding streams, and often times they are unsuccessful. A great number of these challenges have roots in our federal homelessness funding structures, but the state has opportunities to do better by:

- Ensuring explicit reference to domestic violence, domestic violence shelters, and a gendered analysis of the needs of those experiencing homelessness. The latest budget failed to do so.
- The budget could also provide a dedicated amount of funding for DV services, as it does for youth homelessness.
- Ensure that any language around data collection for homelessness incorporates the confidentiality requirements for victim service providers, and the comparable databases as well as alternate data sources that victim service providers can use. We know that what gets counted, counts. And so long as victim service provider data is excluded from our state's analysis of homelessness simply because they are complying with vital federal confidentiality protections, we will continue to overlook these intersections.
- Ensure that any focus on family homelessness explicitly include domestic violence service providers, especially when every night, more children than adults are served in domestic violence shelters.

Domestic violence programs know what works and are implementing a range of responses – from emergency shelter to transitional housing, and homelessness prevention + rapid housing supports through an innovative model called Domestic Violence Housing First. I want to give tremendous appreciation to Cal OES, the state agency tasked with administering all of the DV funding, for piloting this project six years ago, and growing it into the successful model it is today, with 65 orgs across the state implementing. These programs have historically been funded only with federal dollars, through the Victims of Crime Act Fund. In the past several years the fund's balance has been declining precipitously, and so has the amount that Congress releases to the states. This spring, Cal OES began its necessary planning for how they would roll out cuts to victim service providers – at perhaps as much as a 25% across the board cut. The legislature's budget committee was quick to hear from us about the potentially devastating impacts of such cuts, and as a result the state budget allocated \$100 million in funding to keep this successful Domestic Violence Housing First model, as well as so many other domestic violence and crime victim services programs, stable.

Another area to discuss in the arena of housing is landlord/tenant issues, which I know my colleague Tina will address in her remarks.

We of course can't talk about homelessness and housing insecurity without talking about the sheer lack of affordable housing in this state, and poverty.

Economic Justice

Another core area for our work is economic justice for survivors. Though financial abuse occurs in 99% of domestic violence cases, a 2014 study showed that 78% of Americans did not recognize financial abuse as a form of domestic violence.¹ Examples of financial abuse include: forcing a partner to miss, leave or be late to work; harassing a partner at work; controlling how money is spent; withholding money or basic living resources; giving a partner an “allowance”; stealing money, credit, property, or identity from a partner; and/or forcing a partner to file fraudulent legal financial documents or overspend on credit cards.²

A survivor may be forced to stay with an abuser due to concerns about economic stability. In a 2012 survey, three out of four victims said they stayed with their abusers longer for economic reasons.³ Of the 85% of victims who returned to their abusers, a significant number cited an inability to address their finances.⁴

We hope the legislature will work with us next year to pass SB 373 by Senator Dave Min, currently a 2-year bill, to address the issue of coerced debt and subsequent debt collection against survivors. Additional areas of work include:

- Providing flexible financial assistance directly to survivors.
- Improving our CalWORKs system’s response to domestic violence survivors & to all experiencing poverty.
- Maintaining attention on increasing access to childcare, especially outside of a 9-5 M-F work week.
- Increasing access to paid family leave at wage replacement rates high enough to support low-income workers in taking time off, and access to a higher number of paid sick days.

These economic issues not only support survivors who are recovering and rebuilding after experiencing violence but can also help to prevent violence before it ever occurs. By reducing economic stress in families, we can reduce the likelihood of abuse and harm. I’ll come back to the topic of prevention in just a moment.

Access to Justice

Accessing our court system has been a challenging process for many throughout the pandemic. Thankfully, advocates and many courts have been able to adapt, supporting survivors in navigating through new processes. This summer I presented to the Judicial Council’s Post Pandemic Working group about the experiences of the domestic violence field, and I’ll share some of those relevant pieces here.

Some examples of what has been working well include:

- Electronic filing of Domestic Violence Restraining Orders
- Ex parte orders completed via email, saving survivors time and eliminating transportation challenges
- Allowance for electronic signatures on pleadings
- Departments are more responsive to email now

Remote appearance has been successful in many ways, and there are bills pending on the Governor’s desk allow for continued remote filing and remote appearance. However, they are not without their own challenges, including barriers for those who are homeless, low income, LEP, or who lack technology access.

Additionally, there is a need for better (more clear, comprehensive and affirmative) court communication to survivors, especially to low-income self-represented litigants. Courts should provide resources for litigants to get

¹ Adams, Adrienne E. “Measuring the Effects of Domestic Violence on Women’s Financial Well-being.” CFS Research Brief 2011-5.6.

² Tisdale, S. (2016). “Breaking the Chains of Financial Abuse.” Black Enterprise, 46(6), 52-55.

³ Mary Kay. (2012). “Truth About Abuse Survey Report.” The Nation.

⁴ Salamone, Nancy. (September 2010). “Domestic Violence and Financial Dependency.” Forbes

their questions answered via telephone, as well as through in-person services. We regularly hear from litigants that they cannot reach a person or leave a message when they call the mediation department or the general court hotline number.

Language access continues to be a barrier. Website systems for some of our courts only available in English, everyone was required to file/submit through website. Some items have now been translated, but this is limited. We also hear about courts contacting survivors in English only, including when calling to notify a survivor to pick up their Restraining Order paperwork, or to remind them of an upcoming hearing. Failing to provide this information in a language the survivor understands limits their practical ability to access court protections.

Inconsistent access with varying policies and practices creates additional barriers. We hear regularly about the need for more consistency in filing and hearing practices between courts on all levels. Differing rules from courtroom to courtroom is especially challenging for self-represented litigants. Finally, we also hear from advocates that service of orders by Sheriff's department has been challenging in some communities

Recommendations:

- Funding for legal services is essential for survivors to access the full scope of protections that should be available to them.
- Continue allowing electronic filing and delivery of completed ROs via email
- Consider hybrid models that allow survivors options for hearings
- Remote access is beneficial and options for video and audio appearances should continue
- In-person services and options to appear in person are essential as well
- Eliminate the fees (especially in DV cases) to participate in a hearing remotely and eliminate the requirement to seek fee waiver.
- Provide Remote Simultaneous Interpreting (RSI) for interpreting for remote hearings
- Self-help services & clerks should be available both in person and via telephone/remote access
- Keep the COVID rule allowing for extended issuance periods for Emergency Protective Orders
- Work with the Sheriffs to improve service processes
- Remote viewing of court hearings by the public must be assured and easily accessed (except of course for confidential proceedings). "Court watch" observation of remote hearings should be improved.

Domestic Violence Service Providers

I want to turn now to some of the challenges facing domestic violence service providers in supporting survivors through these challenging times. I've already spoken about the immense demand for their services, and the fact that they have significantly altered their methods of providing services during the pandemic. We must recognize that these advocates are essential workers, who have continued to provide critical services, often in person. Programs have never closed, and the work has never stopped. Today, programs are struggling with staff burnout, secondary trauma, and turnover. Limited funding for programs means that many have been unable to pay advocates competitive wages, increasing rates of turnover and challenges with hiring for open positions.

Domestic violence advocates and preventionists are the greatest resources programs have in meeting the needs of survivors and their communities. We cannot do this essential work without them. The legislature can support programs and advocates by providing regular, consistent increases to the state's funding for domestic violence programs. Currently, the state general fund allocates \$20.6 million to the 102 shelter-based programs every year, and this amount has stayed flat for a decade, despite rising costs of living. The state can also take steps to streamline grant requirements and allow programs flexibility in how they allocate funding to adapt to their needs.

Prevention

As I wrap up, I want to come back to the issue of prevention. All of this trauma, all of this pain and struggle can be prevented. At the Partnership, we believe firmly that we can create a society where DV no longer exists, but we can't do it without the help of our state leaders.

I want to recognize the legislature for providing needed funding for domestic and sexual violence prevention, including \$15 million in this year's budget to support community-based prevention efforts. This builds on two prior fiscal year investments. Unfortunately, these funds have been committed as one-time funds in each budget. Without ongoing funding that our state administrator and local programs can rely on, it is incredibly challenging to build the long-lasting work in communities needed to make real change. We look forward to working with the legislature and administration to secure ongoing funding in the next budget cycle.

The legislature can also support societal-level change to create protective environments and reduce risk factors for violence. This can include:

- Social norms change; including speaking up about this issue, and speaking out against violence. Domestic Violence Awareness Month is coming up in October, and is a clear opportunity for all legislatures to speak about this issue.
- Strengthen economic supports for families: this can include actions to increase household financial security, work-family supports, and housing affordability
- Disrupt the developmental pathways toward partner violence, including supporting early childhood in home visitation and parenting skill and family relationship programs

Work Across All Systems

Finally, if it hasn't become clear yet from my remarks, the needs of DV survivors, especially as we emerge from this pandemic, are wide ranging and touch nearly every aspect of our systems and structures, and therefore of our state government. I have barely scratched the surface with my remarks here today. We need a coordinated response across all state agencies. At the moment, President Biden's administration is working on a national action plan to address Gender Based Violence, and it is clear that in a state as large and complicated as ours, we would benefit from something similar, as well as a central point-person within the state government to ensure that *every* department – Department of Social Services, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Education and so on - is incorporating the needs of survivors and a focus on prevention into their work.

I am proud of and grateful for the collaborative work we engage in with many state agencies – the responsiveness of California's Office of Emergency Services as the primary funder for domestic violence service providers; the California Department of Public Health for their partnership on prevention, the open communication with eh Homelessness Coordinating and Financial Council, and more. But there's still more to be done, across all of our state agencies.

With that, I want to thank you for this conversation – one that I hope will be just a beginning, with more to come. Thank you for your time today, and I look forward to continuing our work together.

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September 28, 2021

Chair Timothy S. Grayson
Assembly Select Committee on Streamlining Services for Victims
State Capitol, Rm. 4164
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249

RE: Written Testimony – *Examining Interpersonal Violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic*

Dear Assemblymember Grayson,

Thank you for holding an important hearing on examining interpersonal violence and allowing Western Center on Law and Poverty to testify. As a public interest law firm representing the interest of low-income Californians in need of housing, health care, and public benefits – areas that survivors of interpersonal violence need strong advocacy in, we are glad to testify on the recommendations for survivors at this critical time.

The issues facing survivors of interpersonal violence, and specifically survivors of domestic violence, stalking, dating violence, and elder abuse, were all problems survivors faced long before the pandemic took hold. COVID-19 has highlighted the fact that survivors face increased housing and economic instability and the need for lifesaving intervention.

As we discussed, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) are at higher risk of experiencing domestic violence. For example, Black women are 29% more likely to experience domestic violence compared to their white counterparts. Similarly, Asian-American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) (41%-60%) and Indigenous women (37.5%) are more likely to experience domestic violence compared to the baseline of 25% of women experiencing domestic violence. While we see that there is a decrease of reported domestic violence among immigrant women, evidence shows that this is because immigrant women are afraid to report the abuse and risk deportation by ICE, which was and is a frequent threat in immigrant communities. In fact, immigrant women experience a 48% increase in domestic violence after they immigrate to the United States. Additionally, immigrant survivors who seek relief and protection through federal statutes like the Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA) are forced into a traumatic and abusive power dynamic because to avail themselves of the protections, their abuser must be a citizen or resident of the United States.

It is important to highlight that interpersonal violence does not impact all survivors equally. Those from marginalized and immigrant communities face additional barriers to services and any solution must focus on equity and inclusion for those survivors. The state must focus any solution that addresses the unique needs of BIPOC and immigrant communities and remove barriers that tie services to immigration status. The Governor must pass legislation like AB 1461 (Reyes), which was unanimously passed by the Legislature, that will provide immigrant women access to public benefits while they await their U- Visa, T-Visa, and Asylum application.

In addition to centering the voices of BIPOC and immigrant survivors, California must develop a three-pronged approach to support them. First, the state must focus on trauma informed, survivor centered services. Second, the state must provide survivors with unrestricted direct funding. Finally, the state must develop and fund innovative programs that work in conjunction with community



organizations to build lasting relationships to support survivor independence through safe, stable, and affordable housing.

First, the state must adopt survivor centered, trauma informed models of care that do not exclude survivors based on immigration status, such as the Domestic Violence Housing First Model, driven by the survivor’s wants and needs. Due to stay-at-home orders and offices closing, some services have been inaccessible to survivors during the pandemic. The state needs to support mobile programs that reduce barriers to accessing their services by allowing providers to meet survivors where they feel most comfortable. They must be well-funded innovative programs that are well-equipped to identify safe and stable housing resources, can help a survivor overcome housing barriers, and assist survivors with all housing needs.

Second, the state must trust that survivors will do what is necessary for them and their unique needs by giving survivors unrestricted direct funding to support themselves. Survivors are often economically and financially abused by their partner; whether that is in the form of the abuser opening accounts in the survivors’ name, controlling all the money, or in cases I’ve often seen, refusing to pay rent, utilities, and other bills to control the survivor or force an eviction. Because the survivor does not have funds to pay for their life necessities, they either stay with the abuser or risk falling into homelessness. While litigating in Los Angeles, I often saw community agencies willing to pay for survivor’s rent to avoid eviction, but the landlord would not accept the compensation because they did not want to sign the documentation required, leaving the survivor no choice but to move, most often into homelessness – something that could have been avoided if the survivor had funding directly given to them. Providing financial assistance isn’t a novel idea. In fact, nineteen organizations across California have flexible financial assistance. Those organizations reported that 61.7% of the assistance requested by survivors was for rental assistance and 17 % was for move-in costs. Rather than the organization acting as an intermediary, the funding should go directly to the survivor. The state must develop programs that work collaboratively with survivors to determine the level and amount of financial need to meet the survivor’s need with no cap and no requirements that survivors meet arbitrary goals to receive funding.

Finally, the state must develop and fund innovative programs that work in conjunction with the community to build lasting relationships to support the survivors’ housing stability while centering survivor voices. Many survivors cannot access housing because there is limited safe affordable housing available. Once they do find housing, they cannot sign a lease because they face discrimination based on race, and/or lack of rental or employment history. The state must shift its focus from temporary and emergency shelter to investing in a variety of permanent safe, stable, and affordable housing options for survivors. The state must develop and fund programs that work in conjunction with the community to build lasting relationships that support the survivors’ housing stability.

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I want to thank the Chair and members of this committee for holding this important hearing and giving me the opportunity to testify. I am happy to provide more information or discuss any of these recommendations in depth.

Sincerely,

Tina Rosales
Policy Advocate

CC: Samantha Yturalde, Legislative Assistant, Office of Assemblymember Timothy Grayson
Jennifer Armenta, Legislative Intern, Office of Assemblymember Timothy Grayson

Witness Supporting Documents



C A L I F O R N I A
DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON STREAMLINING SERVICES FOR VICTIMS
OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE – September 20, 2021

Calls for Help, Arrests, and Convictions, 2015-2020

Year	Total Calls	Arrests	Convictions
2015	162,302	127,137	39,596
2016	164,569	131,541	38,713
2017	169,362	133,355	39,261
2018	166,890	133,735	39,408
2019	164,123	131,401	35,496
2020	160,646	113,572	24,159
2020 Decrease From 5 Year Avg.	2.9%	13.6	37.2



Arrests, by Year and Month

Month	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
January	10,204	10,541	10,529	10,723	10,645	10,453	8,645
February	9,495	10,157	9,565	9,846	9,573	9,869	8,223
March	10,903	10,647	10,949	10,980	11,041	9,533	9,157
April	10,272	10,841	11,046	11,256	11,106	8,470	8,943
May	10,860	11,770	11,839	11,800	11,448	9,637	9,830
June	11,140	11,572	11,651	11,305	11,551	8,982	9,217
July	11,481	11,568	12,344	12,457	12,217	9,610	9,755
August	11,608	11,813	11,848	12,270	11,935	10,406	9,185
September	10,878	11,153	11,450	11,114	11,194	9,798	
October	10,895	11,078	11,380	11,249	10,803	9,746	
November	9,478	10,287	10,327	10,339	9,886	8,674	
December	9,923	10,114	10,427	10,396	10,002	8,394	
Year Total	127,137	131,541	133,355	133,735	131,401	113,572	76,837

