

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES AND JUSTICE GRANTS**



FY 2025 Budget Oversight Hearing
Testimony of

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Director

Before the
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
The Honorable Brooke Pinto, Chairperson
Council of the District of Columbia

April 25, 2024



Good morning, Chairwoman Pinto, members, and staff of the Committee. I am Jennifer L Porter, the Director of the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG) and I am joined today by John Nitz, Agency Fiscal Officer. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

For FY25, the Mayor's proposed budget for OVSJG is \$78,995,940. The Mayor's FY25 budget proposal includes investments that focus on public safety and revitalizing our Downtown. These crucial investments include the important role OVSJG plays in community-based healing and trauma informed restoration.

OVSJG's budget includes investments for increased funding for sexual assault services and victim services, investments for housing, and services for domestic violence victims/survivors. Funds are allocated across programs as follows, approximately:

- \$1.2 million in Agency Administration;
- \$10.4 million for Access to Justice;
- \$16.1 million in Justice Grants; and
- \$49.3 million in Victim Services.

Over 95 percent of OVSJG's budget is for grants, including grants to community-based organizations and District agencies providing services to victims of crime. This year's budget will see the sunset of the historic American Rescue Plan Act funds which temporarily supported the expansion and sustaining of justice grants and victim support through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Justice Grants

The projected FY25 budget for Justice Grants is \$16.1 million. Reentry services providers utilize these funds to conduct individual needs assessments and meet the varied needs of returning citizens to assist with reintegration, avoid homelessness, and reduce recidivism. Justice grants funding includes family reunification supports, pre-release services, and connection to services that the supporting community of individuals leaving incarceration need for success including parenting classes, financial management, and resources that better position individuals before they are released.



Victim Services

The FY25 proposed budget reflects specific investments in services for victims/survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, life-threatening intentional trauma, and crime victims in general. In addition to a recurring \$3 million investment for funding of the Sexual Assault Victims Rights Amendment Act (SAVRAA), this years' budget includes an enhancement of \$161,000 for survivor/victim advocacy, storage costs for the Physical Evidence Recovery Kits (PERK), recruitment of additional nurses who can travel to hospitals to conduct the Sexual Assault Nurse Examination (SANE) examination, and other sexual assault services.

This budget also includes a recurring investment of \$3.7 million with an additional enhancement of \$611,000 for victim/survivor service providers to continue to create and implement accessible and comprehensive victim services, including crisis intervention, advocacy, case management, trauma-informed mental health services, shelter, and other services that promote healing.

Targeted Services

The Targeted Services budget this year includes:

- Private Security Camera Incentive Program at \$822,000 including the increase of \$322,000 for 1 FTE and program support.
- Community Capacity Building/Community Capacity Grant with a recurring investment of \$500,000 for targeted training, technical assistance, and funding for community-based organizations (CBOs) to enhance their ability to effectively manage District grant funding.

Closing Remarks

In closing, I would like to thank Mayor Bowser for her support of the mission of the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants and our shared DC values of building a safer, stronger DC. The resources allocated to our agency play a critical role in supporting healing, safety, and justice for residents of the District of Columbia. The Council and this Committee are critical allies in this effort, and I thank you for your ongoing support of OVSJG. Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My team and I are available to answer your questions at this time.

