

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

June 4, 2020

The Honorable Kim Reynolds  
Governor of Iowa  
Iowa State Capitol  
1007 East Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Governor Reynolds,

We are writing to request that, as federal resources become available in response to COVID-19, you ensure the needs of Iowa domestic violence prevention programs are quickly and appropriately funded.

We know that survivors of domestic violence are not safe at home and the danger they face has been exacerbated by COVID-19. Children are especially vulnerable in this time, as they no longer have school or childcare programs where trained adults can watch for signs of abuse. We know that in times of disaster or crisis, domestic violence increases.

We have heard from service providers across Iowa that the pandemic is intensifying the needs of survivors of domestic violence. They face the unprecedented challenge of providing services safely and are struggling with the additional costs of doing so, while simultaneously bracing for a dramatic surge in the need for services as Iowa re-opens for business.

To effectively assist survivors, our communities need more resources. They need to be able to provide safe, sanitary housing, find innovative ways to assist those who may be socially isolated, purchase supplies which are often out of stock or have increased in price, and maintain emergency 24-hour help lines. Importantly, COVID-19 has added to the challenges of safely providing emergency shelter services and in helping clients avoid eviction and stay in their homes. Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children. It is critical that survivors of violence do not lose their safe housing during this time. Ensuring CARES Act and other federal funding is administered quickly and that the needs of survivors are specifically addressed in the allocation of funding is critically important.

We were proud to support the CARES Act, which provided \$45 million in supplementary funding for emergency shelter and support for domestic violence survivors through the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), \$4 billion for Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), and \$5 billion for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). It also established a \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) and supplemental nutrition programs to provide food and supplies to those in need.

Addressing housing instability and homelessness is a key aspect of an effective pandemic response, and it especially helps domestic violence survivors. The flexibility in the CARES Act specifically allows ESG and CDBG, and other traditional federal housing assistance funds, to be used to provide emergency shelter, or rental, mortgage, or utility assistance to help keep individuals housed. We also encourage Iowa use funding from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) for this purpose.

We were encouraged by your announced plans to address this issue and we hope Iowa moves quickly to maximize use of these funds. Domestic violence service providers should be eligible to compete on equal footing with other housing assistance providers.

Additionally, federal law includes robust housing non-discrimination provisions that protect domestic violence victims and service providers from discrimination in accessing housing and federal funds. Domestic violence victims routinely face eviction for the actions of their abusers and both victims and service providers in Iowa have been limited in accessing services and funding to address the needs of survivors. While we must do more in these difficult times, it is important that the State of Iowa quickly and immediately distribute this funding to serve our vulnerable Iowans.

We request that as Iowa receives funding, grants, and other federal assistance that will support our domestic violence programs, you will ensure this money is provided quickly in order to ensure Iowans get the assistance they desperately need. We look forward to working with you during this difficult time.

Sincerely,



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Cindy Axne  
Member of Congress



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Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senator