



State of Rhode Island
Office of the General Treasurer

James A. Diossa
General Treasurer

5 March 2024

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.
Chair, House Judiciary Committee

The Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee

RE: 2024 H-7747, *Ac Act Relating to Criminal Procedure – Criminal Injuries Compensation*

Chair Craven:

I write in strong support of 2024 H-7747, introduced by Representative Caldwell at my request. This bill would permit victims who qualify for compensation under the Crime Victim Compensation Program (the “CVCP”) to use up to \$1,000 of their final award to modify their home in order to ensure their future safety.

Administered by the Office of the General Treasurer, the CVCP helps thousands of innocent victims allay the economic cost of crime, whether it be medical expenses, the cost of physical relocation, or lost earnings. *See* R.I. Gen. Laws § 12-25-22(a). Over the past four years, the CVCP has helped over 1,300 individuals, and impacted thousands across our state.

State law limits the use of Program funds by those who receive compensation to certain qualifying expenses. Program funds can be used – *inter alia* – to cover burial expenses, funeral expenses, crime scene clean-up, pecuniary losses to dependents of the deceased victim (such as lost wages), and expenses incurred as a result of physical injury or death to the victim (such as medical bills or mental health treatment). Under current statutory language, victims can also use up to \$5,000 of their final award to physically relocate.

But given the present housing market (both availability and cost) and personal restraints (such as family network, or schools) relocation may not be a viable option for some. For victims wishing to remain in their residence, this bill would allow up to \$1,000 of their final award to be used to make reasonable modifications to their home necessary to help ensure their safety. This would include items such as a modest home security system, or the cost to rekey locks. The specifics of

what is or is not reasonable would be the subject of regulations to be promulgated by the General Treasurer upon passage.

This bill would not expend more Program funds, so it does *not* have a financial cost to the Program or to the State. Rather, a victim would simply be given the option of using their Program award for a new reason (home security), which is currently prohibited. Victims will still be able to use program funds to relocate, should they choose to do so.

I urge this Committee to support innocent crime victims and recommend passage of this bill.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JD' or similar initials, enclosed within a circular flourish.

James A. Diossa
General Treasurer

cc: The Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi
 The Honorable Justine Caldwell