



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Marjaree Mason Center Avoids Major Funding Shortfalls Following Recent Local and State Budget Approvals**

Fresno, CA — (July 1, 2024) — Massive cuts to federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Crime Victims Fund (CVF) this year threatened vital support for millions of Americans after experiencing crimes caused against them, including several local programs that help victims of crime heal and rebuild their lives.

On a statewide level, the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) disburses funds from the federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Crime Victims Fund (CVF) for an array of critical services and programs that support Californians after they have experienced a crime which includes domestic violence service providers, Rape Crisis Centers, legal assistance, human trafficking services, a range of options to address survivor homelessness, and other vital services.

The proposed allocation of \$1.2 billion in the President's FY 24 budget and the FY24 House and Senate appropriations bills is a 40% cut to the CVF funding, compared to FY23.

In a recent survey administered by the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence and ValorUS® (the California state coalition for sexual violence agencies), 89 California-based sexual and domestic violence organizations are projecting disastrous consequences resulting from the impending decline in funding.

As a result of efforts from hundreds of advocates and survivors urging California to step up, a final budget agreement was reached between Governor Newsome and the Legislature including \$103 million in one-time, backfill funding for victims' services programs on June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

On a local level, the Fresno City Council took decisive action by advancing a budget motion just a few days prior to allocate \$300,000 to address funding shortfalls due to VOCA and other funding gaps (losses) in domestic violence emergency response and safe housing programs. Without adequate funding, the City Council knew that these programs — our community's safety net — were at risk.

As the only domestic violence shelter and supportive services agency in Fresno County, Marjaree Mason Center stands as a crucial resource, providing 24/7 crisis support and emergency shelter. Fresno has the highest per capita calls to law enforcement for domestic violence among California's 10 most populated counties. The City of Fresno, specifically, has seen a troubling

rise in domestic violence cases since the onset of the COVID pandemic, straining local resources and highlighting the urgent need for consistent funding.

Without these funding allocations, survivors faced reduced access to safe housing, longer wait times for counseling, and diminished emergency support during their most vulnerable moments.

The allocation of this funding both at the state and local level, means that when survivors call the Marjaree Mason Center's 24/7 crisis hotline, there will be an advocate on the other end to answer and that survivors will be able to access shelter when they must flee from violence.

Though there are additional budget concerns to help meet the increased need for services, this funding ensures that the Marjaree Mason Center services can continue to operate at a consistent capacity.

While advocating for a permanent solution at the state and federal levels, the Marjaree Mason Center is grateful for the support of Fresno City Council President Annalisa Perea and Council Vice President, Mike Karbassi, as well as all the entire City Council and Mayor Jerry Dyer for this crucial budget allocation.

This unified action sends a powerful message that the City of Fresno is committed to ensuring domestic violence survivors receive the support they need to recover, heal, and thrive.

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### **About Marjaree Mason Center**

For over 40 years, the Marjaree Mason Center has offered safe housing and support services to adults and their children affected by domestic violence in Fresno County. As the only comprehensive domestic violence agency in Fresno County, the Marjaree Mason Center provides housing, legal services, counseling and education to survivors and youth. The Center was founded in 1979 after the murder of Marjaree Mason, a native of Easton. A graduate of Washington High School and Reedley College, Marjaree lived in Fresno for 31 years and was well known in the community. To contact MMC, call the business center at 559.237.4706, the 24-hour confidential emergency hotline at 559.233.HELP (4357) or [help@mmcenter.org](mailto:help@mmcenter.org), or learn more online at [www.mmcenter.org](http://www.mmcenter.org).