



Economic Justice, Mobility, and Security Recommendations For the Gender-based Violence National Action Plan

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Introduction

All too often, abusive individuals seek to control, sabotage, and exploit survivors of gender-based violence's (GBV) economic opportunities. Whether at home, in the community, or in the workplace harm-doers can disrupt and impair survivors' ability to pursue and maintain employment, acquire financial resources, and achieve independence. The resulting economic insecurity is one of the primary reasons survivors of GBV remain in abusive relationships or trapped in an unsafe job.

Economic security is a pathway to safety for survivors. Economic security, particularly through a good job, means that individuals can have the financial resources and opportunity necessary to avoid the entrapments of poverty that can force individuals to turn to unsafe relationships and employment to meet their basic needs. But for too many, a lack of financial opportunity can leave them vulnerable to exploitation and effectively eliminate potential pathways to safety and recovery.

Below are economic security recommendations for a GBV National Action Plan proposed by Futures Without Violence (FUTURES) and other economic justice experts. To help survivors of GBV build and sustain economic security we must: (1) increase access to economic opportunity, (2) establish workplace protections, and (3) ensure a robust safety net and access to the financial resources necessary to provide flexibility to weather potential crises, whether leaving an abusive relationship or addressing the long-term costs of economic abuse. By advancing policies, practices, and systems that build, protect, and restore survivors' economic independence, we help survivors regain power and control over their own lives and prevent GBV.

Increase Access to Economic Opportunity

Disrupt the Impact of Gender-based Violence and Harassment on Youth

Teenage years are critical times in which individuals build the foundation for future economic security – completing high school and pursuing higher education, first jobs and paychecks, first bank accounts and credit cards. Yet during these formative years, girls and young women and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) individuals are at a particularly high risk of violence and abuse. Teens who experience family, dating/sexual, or community violence are more likely to drop out of school and face adverse educational outcomes. Teens in abusive relationships are often prevented from thriving academically, pursuing opportunities that would improve their future careers, or savings for their financial goals thus jeopardizing their future economic security and potentially entrapping them in the cycle of abuse. Teens also face high rates of sexual harassment in their first jobs which are often in the hospitality industry. Given the life-long consequences of these lost economic

opportunities, it is critical that prevention and intervention efforts recognize and respond to violence and harassment among adolescents.

- Educate middle and high schoolers about healthy relationships and signs of coercive behavior that can impact their ability to be safe and independent in the future, such as financial control, education and employment sabotage, and financial exploitation;
- Educate school administrators, instructional staff, and support staff (including school resource officers, if present) to recognize and respond to violence and harassment in a trauma-responsive, survivor-centered way so that they have the support they need to stay engaged in the classroom;
- Increase the number of school counselors and psychologists to ensure students have greater access to support services;
- Offer flexibility and provide resources to students experiencing violence and trauma so that they do not face negative academic impacts; and,
- Educate teen workers about sexual harassment in the workplace and workers' rights and provide a hotline or chatline specifically dedicated for teen workers.

Ensure Livable Wages for Survivors and Access to Robust Benefits

Many survivors of GBV have difficulty both managing their survival and managing their professional career development. Poverty, systemic racism, and gender-based oppression rob them of that choice - and once they have experienced GBV, breaking the cycle is challenging without economic resources. A job offering a living-wage and a career pathway offers survivors economic security and the ability to compete in the open market for employment. For survivors living at or under the poverty level, a living-wage is the difference between remaining with an abusive partner or seeking safety, between residing in a shelter or permanent housing, and between barely surviving or thriving. Survivors also need robust employment benefits, such as health care, cost-of-living raises, paid annual and medical leave, paid family and safe leave, and access to collective bargaining. Other critical needed actions include:

- Increase the minimum wage to bolster wages for the most vulnerable workers;
- Increase access to flexible child care that is available on demand and during the evenings and weekends;
- Enact the SAFE Act to establish universal access to paid safe leave;
- Federalize Unemployment Insurance access for survivors who need to leave their jobs due to abuse or lose their jobs as a result of abuse or violence in the workplace; and,
- Federalize Predictive Scheduling laws to ensure that survivors can plan ahead to meet their and their families' safety needs;
- Sexual harassment and violence are incredibly common in the restaurant industry (with [90 percent of tipped workers reporting harassment](#)) in part due to the power imbalance that exists between servers and the individuals providing their tips.
 - Eliminate the sub-minimum wage for tipped workers to reduce this power differential and allow workers to report harassment without fear of losing wages.

Invest in Survivor Economic Empowerment Programming

To help survivors of GBV develop and enhance practical and technical skills so that they may successfully obtain and maintain employment, many domestic violence and human trafficking programs, particularly those offering transitional housing programs, have implemented job readiness or career exploration programming, job training opportunities, or entrepreneurship classes. Under the Violence Against Women Act of 2013 (VAWA), transitional housing grantees funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), are able to use grant funds to provide services to “secure employment, including obtaining employment counseling, occupational training, job retention counseling, and counseling concerning re-entry in to the workforce.” Similarly, the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), funds specialized services for survivors of human trafficking including “economic and leadership empowerment and/or education” which is defined as programming for “vocational/skills training, financial counseling, job readiness assistance, education programs, and assistance with educational and professional certifications.”

- Increase funding for and encourage grantees already receiving funding available through VAWA, Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), and Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) to build their capacity to provide economic empowerment services tailored to survivors;
- Support and provide dedicated funding for economic empowerment programs that are tailored for survivors and that provide intensive-skills based training in academic literacy, professional development, and digital literacy with financial support for 6-24 months so survivors have the time and space to become a professional fit for the type of employment that will provide enduring financial stability for them and their families;
- Expand and prioritize funding for culturally specific programs to provide survivor-centered, trauma-responsive, anti-racist services, including economic justice programming designed and carried out within BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities; and,
- Create a technical assistance and training program area under OVC and OVW grant programs to support the development and implementation of best practices and replicable economic empowerment programs for survivors.

Create an Inclusive and Trauma-responsive Workforce Development System to Meet the Needs of Survivors

The Workforce Investment and Opportunities Act (WOIA) was designed to strengthen and improve the public workforce system by helping workers – particularly adults and youth with significant barriers to employment -- obtain quality occupations and careers. While it focuses on the needs of historically disadvantaged individuals, it unfortunately lacks a gender-lens and a racial-justice lens. Thus, it does not respond to the obstacles or address the needs of women, gender non-conforming individuals, and BIPOC individuals who seek economic opportunity. It also fails to recognize and respond to the impacts of trauma and the unique obstacles faced by survivors, which often prevent survivors from enrolling or completing a training program.

- Add women, BIPOC, and gender-non-conforming individuals as priority targets populations for services under WIOA, acknowledging that people with these identities face unique obstacles to education and employment opportunities due to historic and systemic sexism and racism;
- Support the development of WIOA Title I and Title II programming that is trauma-responsive and supports women, LGBTQIA+ communities, and communities of color;
- Require training to ensure that program staff implementing WIOA Title I services are trauma-responsive and free of gender and racial biases and understand the unique safety challenges faced by survivors of GBV and how to provide survivor-centered, trauma-responsive support to individuals in crisis;
- Require WIOA Title I adult service training providers review their policies and practices and implement strategies that improve access and opportunities for individuals with complex barriers, including violence and trauma;
- Provide capacity building funding that WIOA Title I training programs can use to invest in wrap-around support services to help mitigate obstacles to participation and success, such as mental health counselors, child care, career mentors;
- Expand WIOA training scholarships to provide financial resources, including scholarships, for learners/job seekers and create a set aside specifically for survivors of GBV;
- Establish a technical assistance, training, and capacity building grant program for WIOA funded programs to ensure that service providers have access to the expertise and resources necessary to adopt a survivor-centered and trauma-responsive lens to their programs and services; and,
- Allocate and set aside funding for the Reentry Employment Opportunities Program within the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration to support specialized trauma-responsive reentry workforce development training for the 75 percent of incarcerated women who are domestic violence survivors and 86 percent of women who are sexual violence survivors.

Bolster the Work Done Under Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO), Office of Women's Business Ownership (OWBO), and Minority Business Enterprises

- Increase gender-specific job training programs to help women enter high-growth, high-wage careers such as the WANTO program or STEM programs; doing so would enable survivors, who predominantly identify as women, to develop the skills needed to secure sustainable employment;
- Increase investments in programs under the Office of Women's Business Ownership (OWBO), and Minority Business Enterprises to provide training and financial support for women and BIPOC entrepreneurs who often turn to creating their own work opportunities due to systemic discrimination that has prevented them from accessing employment;

- Create funding and technical assistance resources for survivors to develop, incubate, and support survivor-led small business, cooperatives/collectives, and entrepreneurs as part of a comprehensive workforce development strategy, and ensure that the grant structure fully meets the needs and supports the unique circumstances of survivors of GBV;
- Support the expansion of Community Economic Development (CED) grants to victim service agencies to support the creation of sustainable business and employment opportunities for survivors; and,
- Expand Microenterprise Development (MED) program funds, which currently support the development of small businesses targeting refugees, asylees, and foreign-born victims of human trafficking, to include survivors of GBV so that they may gain financial independence for themselves and their families.

Ensure that Educational Institutions, Particularly Community Colleges, Implement a Trauma-responsive Lens and Provide Wrap-around Services for Survivors

Educational institutions play a central role in preparing individuals for employment success through skills development, training, and providing the credentials needed to successfully secure employment. Moreover, community colleges often partner with employers to develop career pathways and provide a pipeline to employment.

- Create a priority area under Title III Strengthening Institutions Programs of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to focus on building institutional capacity to develop and implement trauma-responsive, survivor-centered policies and practices to better support survivors seeking to enroll in and complete school or a job training program; and,
- Establish a technical assistance, training, and capacity building grant program to ensure that institutions have access to the expertise and resources necessary to bring a survivor-centered and trauma-responsive lens to their programs and services.

Expand the U.S. Department of Labor’s Dislocated Worker Grants to Survivors

Many survivors lose their jobs due to the impacts of violence and trauma – up to 60 percent in recent studies. Additionally, nearly nine in ten survivors reported that their abusive partners interfered with their ability to work.

- Expand DOL’s Dislocated Worker Grants to include survivors of GBV to existing categories of individuals who can access supports recognizing that many survivors lose employment due to violence or are prohibited from working by their abusive partner.

Support Asset Building for Survivors

Asset building through “match savings” programs, micro-loans, credit building programs, and banking programs can help survivors build financial resources as well as repair harm done to their credit. Match savings programs are designed to enable individuals to develop basic personal finance skills, encourage sound money management habits, and help build assets. Flexible privately-funded Matched Savings Account programs may help participants save

toward other goals such as paying off debt, funding auto repairs or car purchases, or paying for child care services or job training. To support survivors in rebuilding their credit, organizations also have started offering micro-loan programs that help survivors pay off their credit cards or other forms of debt resulting from their abusive relationship and that offer funding for starting a small business or enrolling in post-secondary study, all with zero interest and short time frames.

- Establish federally funded matched savings program like the Assets for Independence (AFI) program which led to a 52 percent increase in homeownership, 53 percent increase in business ownership, and a 25 percent reduction in financial hardship.
- Establish micro-loan programs for survivors of GBV so that they may rebuild their credit and seek long-term independence.

Establish Workplace Protections to Build Safe and Supportive Work Environments for Survivors

Preventing, addressing, and ultimately eliminating GBV in the workplace requires both enforcement of existing laws and employers who are committed to workplace cultures of physical and emotional safety, inclusion and belonging, and advancement. It also requires employers to provide comprehensive prevention and response programs that are survivor centered and trauma-responsive.

Take Administrative Actions to Prevent, Address, and Reduce Gender-based Violence and Harassment in the Workplace

- Adopt the definitions of “gender-based violence and

A trauma-responsive workplace centers workers’ physical and psychological safety; strives to build trust through transparency; fosters peer support to build community; works in collaboration with employees to create a mutual beneficial workspace; empowers workers by valuing their voice and providing choice; and acknowledges that historical and systemic sexism and racism is real and works to remove potential biases and discriminatory practices in their own work. These workplaces understand how trauma can impact survivors of GBV and they investigate and work to: minimize harm, provide accommodations so that survivors can recover without economic/advancement penalties or job loss, advance anti-abusive conduct (bullying) and anti-discrimination efforts, as well as model transparency, confidentiality, and accountability.

harassment” and “violence and harassment” from the [International Labor Organization Convention 190](#);

- Improve enforcement of Executive Order 13706 which mandated that federal contractors provide paid sick and safe days to workers applying for new contracts beginning in 2017;
- Increase enforcement of provisions in the [Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act regulations](#) including discrimination against victims of domestic violence as sex discrimination in job training and access to Unemployment Insurance; and,
- Enforce the general duty clause of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) as applied to incidents of GBV in the world of work.

Facilitate Agency Coordination to Prevent, Address, and Reduce Gender-based Violence in the Workplace

The Wage and Hour Division and Women’s Bureau at DOL should:

- Coordinate with states that have adopted laws prohibiting discrimination against survivors of domestic and sexual violence (California, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Oregon, New York and the District of Columbia) to improve implementation and encourage adoption in other states;
- Coordinate with states, counties and cities (Arizona, California, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, Austin, Los Angeles, New York City, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle, Tacoma, Philadelphia, Spokane, the District of Columbia, etc.) that have adopted paid sick and safe days laws to increase education and awareness; and,
- Coordinate with the 14 states (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, and Washington) that have adopted laws providing unpaid job guaranteed leave or leave as a reasonable accommodation specifically to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault/violence.

Model Best Practices by Implementing Comprehensive Prevention and Response Programs to Gender-based Violence and Harassment

The federal government, as the largest employer in the U.S., must model best practices. Below are recommendations that federal agencies, their partners, and Congress can implement or enact to prevent and reduce GBV in the workplace.

Federal Government Agencies and Contract Partners

- Update federal agency guidance and implementation of workplace policies on domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking; and, incorporate an intersectional and inclusive approach, assessing organizational readiness, culture change, and trauma-responsive interventions;

- Promote inclusion of provisions in union collective bargaining agreements to promote the rights and protections of survivors of GBV in the workplace;
- Fund research on the percentage of workers who identify as survivors of GBV, their experiences with discrimination, harassment and violence and their needs;
- Support the development of effective responses to the employment rights needs of survivors;
- Create a training and technical assistance program within DOL to help employers build their capacity to respond to GBV;
- Fund a pilot program to establish a resource sharing hub within the Small Business Administration dedicated to supporting the development and implementation of GBV policies and practices within small businesses under 50 people;
- Incorporate survivor safety into workplace safety oversight, guidance, and training;
- Increase training and education for Wage and Hour Division staff enforcing the Family and Medical Leave Act regarding its availability to survivors of GBV and conduct trainings in the community with service providers on these provisions;
- Train and assist service providers working with survivors on their employment rights;
- Increase funding for education, awareness, and training and technical assistance programs for employers, domestic and sexual violence service providers, employment training programs, federal, state and local government officials including judges, and allied non-governmental organizations about the impact of GBV on workers and the world of work and how to support survivors in the workplace; and,
- Expand access to affordable legal services - provide and promote outreach, training, and technical assistance to increase identification of employment-based needs of survivors and expand access.

Congress

- Ratify and implement ILO C190;
- Expand OSHA's standard recognized workplace hazards to include GBV within its definition of workplace violence;
- Add a priority area and additional resources to the Susan Harwood Grant Program that provides funding specifically for training and education to prevent workplace sexual harassment and violence, particularly for high-risk industries;
- Enact SAFE Act provisions;
- Expand paid leave to include safe leave so that survivors can be paid when they receive medical attention, seek legal assistance, attend court proceedings, and obtain help with safety planning;
- Protect survivors from being fired because of violence, the actions of their abuser, or because they accessed support and/or services;

- Require employers to make reasonable safety precautions or modifications unless undue burden;
- Ensure unemployment insurance for survivors separated because of violence or harassment;
- Create a national awareness campaign to create a culture of prevention and support;
- Commission studies and reports on barriers to survivors' ability to achieve economic security and the costs they bear when seeking safety or pursuing employment or higher education;
- Expand FMLA and paid sick leave laws to cover businesses with 10 or more people; and,
- Pass the Worker Flexibility and Small Business Protection Act to expand labor laws to protect workers classified as independent contractors and workers at sub-contractors, temporary (temp) agencies, and corporate franchises so that they have access to workers' rights.

“To truly confront and change culture, the government and the private sector must work, lead, and advocate together and jointly implement comprehensive prevention and response programs and legislation.”

Ensure a Robust Safety Net and Access to Financial Resources

For survivors of GBV, safety and economic security are inextricably linked.

For survivors of GBV, safety and economic security are inextricably linked. Economic insecurity increases a person's vulnerability to violence and exploitation due to the lack the financial resources needed to meet their most basic needs, such as food and shelter. Without financial resources or the economic opportunities necessary to be independent, studies have found that [74 percent of survivors remain trapped in unsafe relationships](#). Among those who reported staying, 50 percent stayed at least two years longer than they wanted. When survivors do leave, [many return to an abusive partner](#) because they lacked the money to be independent. For workers on the economic margins because of violence, trauma, or low-pay jobs, access to benefits and flexible cash assistance can be transformative. We must provide more opportunities for survivors to obtain flexible, low-barrier cash assistance; support and incentivize state human services departments to do more to support survivors of GBV; strengthen existing cash assistance programs to ensure they are more survivor-centered; ensure that all survivors can access public benefits; and create a pathway to citizenship so that all survivors can be safe and thrive.

Cash Assistance

Cash assistance allows survivors to identify what will help or harm their stabilization and provides them with the means and the agency to do so.

Develop and Implement a Flexible Funding Cash Assistance Program for Survivors of Gender-based Violence

Providing cash assistance to survivors of GBV can help them address their safety and financial insecurity in a direct and impactful way. Cash assistance allows survivors to identify what will help or harm their stabilization and provides them with the means and the agency to do so, rather than replicate the same elements of power and control abusive partners exercised around their finances.

Flexible funding cash assistance also is cost effective. FreeFrom¹ learned that 64 percent of the 6600 survivors who received cash assistance from them needed the cash assistance to “get safe.” The next three most urgent needs, in order, were: utility bills relief, credit and/or debit card relief, and safe employment. FreeFrom also learned that survivors need \$730 on average to get safe immediately and \$978 per month on average to stay safe.

A flexible funding cash assistance program must be available to all survivors, particularly those that are most marginalized, and it should incorporate these provisions:

Co-create a cash assistance program with survivors. Survivors know what they need to feel safe and how to best to achieve stability and economic security. Their voices and their experiences are crucial to develop a cash assistance program that works for them and their children.

Allow survivors to apply for cash assistance through multiple trusted agencies and organizations. It is important for survivors to have options on where they can apply for cash assistance and to trust the organizations or agencies that provide this service. Options may include:

- Federal or state benefit offices,
- Banks and credit unions,
- Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault organizations,
- Culturally specific community-based organizations,
- Tribes,

¹ FreeFrom is a national organization on a mission to create pathways to financial security and long-term safety for survivors of GBV.

- Community Health Centers,
- Head Start Programs, and,
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) offices.

Earmark a certain percentage of cash assistance funding for organizations supporting LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC survivors.

Allow survivors to determine how best to receive cash assistance.

- Check, ACH, PayPal, Venmo, JPay, or Cash app.

Accept a wide range of proof as sufficient verification that an applicant is a survivor.

Because most survivors do not have “proof” that they are survivors and, for many, it would be dangerous to obtain proof like a protective/restraining order, a cash assistance program must allow survivors to present a letter from a friend, therapist, or a domestic violence or sexual assault advocate.

Limit eligibility requirements for cash assistance to an applicant’s status as a survivor.

According to one survey of those receiving cash assistance, 84 percent of survivors would not be able to access cash assistance if they had to meet additional eligibility requirements, such as receiving public benefits, providing proof of income or employment, being enrolled in educational programs, and showing legal status. Additionally, identification requirements are a barrier for trans and indigenous survivors.

Provide survivors with flexible no-strings-attached support. Every survivor knows their circumstances and how best to meet their needs. Giving survivors maximum flexibility to spend their cash assistance as they see fit and not require receipts affirms their dignity and autonomy. It’s also the quickest, most impactful, and cost-effective way to support survivors’ safety.

Ensure best possible funding administrator for a flexible cash assistance program. Possible administrators for a cash assistance program could include, Family Violence Prevention and Services Office (FVPSA), Office on Violence Against Women or state agencies that administer the Crime Victims Fund (if current Victims of Crime Act requirements could be waived).

Fund and support a mechanism for survivors to provide feedback and for program administrators to gather data. To ensure that the cash assistance is meeting the needs of survivors, it is important to support opportunities for recipients of the cash assistance to explain what works and what needs to be improved. Data also can help administrators support and strengthen the cash assistance program.

Incentivize States to Use a Portion of Their TANF Block Grant to Create Supportive Financial Services for Survivors of Gender-based Violence

The Department of Human Services in Oregon utilizes a portion of its TANF block grant to provide emergency financial services to survivors of domestic violence. It's *Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS) program* is a financial assistance grant (up to \$1,200) during an eligibility period that supports survivors by making financial payments that align with their safety plan. This program provides temporary financial assistance to help caretakers and their children address their safety concerns, receive safety planning, and utilize the financial grant to support their safety plan.

The program is flexible and is used often to help survivors fleeing domestic violence situations. Oregon's definition of domestic violence is broad, allowing eligibility for the program to be based on multiple forms of abuse and various relationships such as intimate partner, household or family member. Survivors often use the grant for moving costs, rental security deposits, plane tickets, and emergency sheltering services. Funds can be disbursed quickly and the TANF funding was also used to create domestic violence "points" in other agencies who could then also connect survivors to the available funding regardless of how they entered the human services system. Because of limits in who has access to TANF, this approach by itself will be insufficient, but the Oregon model serves as an excellent example of how best to use TANF to support survivors of GBV.

Services/Supports from State Human Services Agencies

Incentivize States to Develop Programs at Human Service Agencies that Respond to Survivors' Needs

Along with the TA-DVS program described above, Oregon has developed and implemented three other programs that combine federal and state funding to support survivors of GBV.

Co-located Domestic Violence Advocate Program

The Co-Located Domestic Violence Advocate program partners with local domestic violence sexual assault (DVSA) providers to offer free and confidential advocacy services in all of Oregon's Department of Human Services (ODHS) Self-Sufficiency and Child Welfare Offices. Advocates work in partnership with ODHS to assist survivors in accessing services and engaging in Child Welfare programs. This co-location program gives survivors completely confidential support and connects survivors with to benefit programs and safety and advocacy services.

Domestic Violence Point Program

The ODHS Domestic Violence Point program ensures that ODHS staff are connected to Advocates and have support to ask questions. This program is voluntary, with staff from many departments (Self-Sufficiency, Child Welfare, and Aging and Persons with Disabilities) receiving additional training and resources on domestic violence and related topics.

The Domestic Violence Points are versed in policies and practices to support staff in providing the best services and are connected with the co-located domestic violence advocates. Domestic Violence Points and Advocates meet quarterly on a statewide and local level to ensure consistency and maintain strong understanding and collaboration.

Survivor Investment Partnership

The Oregon Legislature has recognized the need to expanding equity and engage more partners to meet survivors where they are most comfortable and safe. It recently awarded ODHS the funding to implement a Survivor Investment Partnership (SIP). This new program will fund Oregon Tribes and culturally specific DVSA providers, expand funding to ODHS' co-located Domestic Violence Advocates, and increase advocacy services throughout Oregon. The SIP program includes Survivor Investment dollars to provide completely flexible funding to DVSA providers to meet the needs of the survivors they are serving. SIP prioritizes collaboration, equity, and recognizes that tribes and culturally specific organizations know their communities best and survivors know their circumstances best.

The Office of Family Assistance should:

- Expand Oregon's TA-DVS program to include all forms of GBV;
- Promote Oregon's TA-DVS program as a model with the inclusion of all forms of GBV;
- Incentivize other states to develop their own TA-DVS program with the inclusion of all forms of GBV by increasing flexibility in allowable uses of funds and what is required to document need; and,
- Work with Congress to increase TANF block grant funding to states so that they can administer, staff, and pay for the TA-DVS programs that includes all forms of GBV.

The Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice should:

- Expand Oregon's Co-located Domestic Violence Advocate Program, Domestic Violence Points Program, and the Survivor Investment Partnership to include all forms of GBV;
- Promote Oregon's Co-located Domestic Violence Advocate Program, Domestic Violence Points Program, and the Survivor Investment Partnership with the inclusion of all forms of GBV;

- Incentivize other states to develop their own Co-located Program, Points Program, and Survivor Investment Partnership that includes all forms of GBV;
- Fund and create a new program to help DV and SA organizations build their capacity to administer or partner with state and local agencies to develop a flexible funding cash assistance program that can be administered by state agencies and directly provided to DVSA non-profit programs, including Tribes and Culturally Specific DVSA programs, to offer flexible funding, no strings attached, to survivors of GBV. This process allows data tracking on a statewide level, but implementation to be individual survivor focused.

Transform TANF Into a Survivor-centered Program that Meets the Needs of Survivors

Given the importance of TANF to survivors' economic well-being, it's critical that the program provide more cash assistance to help survivors address their basic needs and become more accessible and responsive to survivors needs. Below are recommendations from experts, who work with GBV survivors, on ways to improve and strengthen the program:

- Strengthen public benefits policies at the state and federal levels by increasing the level of benefits provided; reduce barriers and increase access for survivors; and provide additional resources (such as transportation, child care, and living-wage work) that promotes economic security for individual, families, and communities;
- Clarify, at the federal and state level, the processes for screening survivors, the exemptions or extensions that are available to survivors, and the documentation required of survivors.
- Provide ongoing training for domestic violence and sexual assault advocates on public benefits programs;
- Provide ongoing training for public benefits caseworkers on the dynamics of GBV, and on providing trauma-responsive services and responses.
- Develop and sustain meaningful, collaborative partnerships between local domestic violence and sexual assault programs and public benefits programs, as well as with other service providers working with low-income families.

Refundable Tax Credits (Child and Earned Income Tax Credits)

A permanent, fully refundable child tax credit (CTC) and a stronger, more inclusive Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) offer needed economic security and safety for survivors of GBV and their children.

Make the CTC Permanent and Fully Refundable Without a Minimum Income Limit

Survivors need a permanent and fully refundable CTC that is delivered monthly to ensure that they can achieve safety and economic security and pay for their monthly expenses and basic necessities.

Ensure All Children, Including All Immigrant Children, Are Eligible to Receive the Child Tax Credit

Through the 2017 Tax Cut and Jobs Act, children without a Social Security number were excluded from eligibility for the child tax credit. It is critical that this change is reversed so that the child tax credit reaches all immigrant children who are otherwise eligible, many of whom live in families who provide essential services to our communities and urgently need the CTC payments to support the needs of their families.

Provide Financial Support to Local Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Programs so that They Can Help Survivors Access the Child Tax Credit

Many families have already received their CTC payments automatically because their family filed their tax returns in recent years. However, there are millions of families, including survivors of GBV, who do not know about the CTC or how to file a tax return to obtain the CTC. Many survivors also report that their abusive partner may be claiming the credit and they fear confronting them even if the abusive partner is claiming it erroneously. Domestic violence and sexual assault programs, with deep ties to the community they serve, are well positioned to support families who need assistance accessing the CTC and provide education to the community about what the CTC does. Technical assistance and resources are needed to support domestic and sexual assault violence advocates to do the critical work of educating and connecting survivors of GBV to the child tax credit.

Reduce the Barriers for Families When Applying and Receiving the CTC

Resources will be needed to increase language access, make the process accessible through a mobile app, and provide community navigators/assisters, like domestic violence and sexual assault advocates, to provide hands-on support.

Include Legislative Language that Acknowledges “Hardship” and Freedom from Penalties for Survivors in the Event an Abusive Partner Inappropriately Claims the Credit

In circumstances of hardship, especially extreme financial hardship or domestic violence, a survivor should be able to receive retroactive payments of the CTC for the full number of months in which they were the primary caregiver, up to a maximum of 12 months. Additionally, a survivor should not be penalized if their abusive partner inappropriately claims the CTC.

Ensure that ITIN Applications Are Expedited by the IRS and that the IRS Has Sufficient Resources and Staff to Process ITIN Applications.

At the present time, it takes approximately 20 weeks for parents, whose kids are currently eligible to get an ITIN, to receive the ITIN. This wait time is too long for survivors and their children that need the CTC for their immediate safety and economic security.

Increase Benefits and Expand Eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit

For survivors of GBV with low to moderate incomes, the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) may provide another means of financial support as it reduces the amount of taxes working survivors owe and may give them a tax refund. Like the CTC, the EITC has the potential to lift families out of poverty, a risk factor for GBV. At the same time, it affords increased financial stability and provides survivors with more options for safety, making it easier to leave abusive relationships and provide for their children.

- Expand the EITC to allow anyone with low to moderate incomes to file for the EITC, including people without children and people who work in the gig economy; and,
- Allow taxpayers with a social security number and those with an Individual Tax Identification Number to file for the EITC. (California allows **all** Californians, regardless of immigration status, who are age 18 and over with and without dependents to receive the state EITC as well as all self-employed workers.)

Guaranteed Income

Support Creating a Guaranteed Income for Survivors

Communities across the country have been piloting guaranteed income programs. [Results and narratives](#) from a recent 2 year pilot program in Stockton California showed that giving people a dependable income floor helped smooth income volatility, increased full time employment, increased mental and physical health and alleviated financial scarcity, creating new opportunities for choice, goal setting and risk taking. Guaranteed income would provide the economic security to allow survivors and their children to seek and maintain their safety, heal from violence, build resiliency, and thrive.

Public Benefits

Many survivors and their children live at or below the poverty line, often as a direct result of their experiences with violence and abuse. To meet their basic needs and allow them to live independently of an abusive partner, leave an unsafe job, or heal from trauma, survivors and their children need robust public benefits including increased housing assistance, 24-hour child care support at home and in the community, unemployment insurance, SNAP benefits, and access to physical, mental and behavioral health services.

Expand Funding and Availability of DV Housing First to Ensure Safe, Stable, and Affordable Housing for Survivors

The cost of housing and the lack of affordable housing makes it exceedingly difficult for survivors of GBV. All survivors and their children need access to safe, stable, and affordable housing so they can leave an abusive relationship and not risk homelessness for themselves and their children. The Domestic Violence Housing First Model (DVHF) has effectively and quickly helped survivors get into safe and stable housing and has provided services to help them move forward with their lives. Three pillars of DVHF model are: survivor-driven, trauma-responsive mobile advocacy; flexible funding assistance; and community engagement. This successful program should be funded and expanded. Additionally, the Department of Housing and Urban Development should continue and grow partnerships with the Family Violence Prevention and Services (FVPSA) Office, Office on Violence Against Women, and Office for Victims of Crime.

Provide Comprehensive, Coordinated, Affordable, and Culturally Relevant Health Care to All Survivors and Expand Medicaid Coverage to All Low-income Survivors

All survivors and their children need physical health, mental health, and behavioral health services that are comprehensive, coordinated, affordable and culturally relevant are particularly crucial for all survivors and their children so that they can heal from violence, build resiliency, and thrive. (See Health and Public Health Recommendations for the GBV National Action Plan.)

Increase Access to Affordable Legal Services for Survivors

Survivors of GBV need access to more affordable legal services to obtain, renew, and enforce protective orders in court; secure child custody orders; and, help with housing, employment, and financial matters. Legal services are essential as they help to empower survivors of GBV by giving them the tools and the knowledge to protect and exercise their rights.

Immigrant Survivors & Legislative Pathway to Citizenship

Ensure that Immigrant Survivors Have Access to Economic Supports

At the present time, many economic opportunities and safety net programs are inaccessible to survivors without work authorization or survivors who do not have social security numbers. Without these important economic supports, survivors are exceedingly vulnerable to violence and exploitation.

- Expand economic supports -- tax credits, unemployment insurance, health care, and public benefit programs (TANF and SNAP) -- to all immigrant survivors and work with Congress to lift the 5-year bar on most benefits for immigrant families.
- Interpret broadly the Family Violence Option in TANF to include all immigrant survivors.
- Exempt immigrant survivors of GBV from program requirements under TANF that limit their access.

Provide More Funding to USCIS to Adjudicate U and T Visa Applications

Many immigrant survivors are eligible for lawful immigration status, with work authorization, through the U visa (crime victims) or T visa (trafficking victims) process. Unfortunately, the adjudication backlogs for both of these visas are exceedingly long. At the present time, there is a 5-year backlog to process U visas and a 2-year backlog to process T visas. During these long waits, survivors lack legal status and the ability to work and are exceedingly vulnerable to further abuse.

- Ensure that USCIS has the resources, staff, and training so that employees can efficiently and effectively work through the U and T visa backlogs; and,
- Lift the U visa annual cap.

End Anti-Immigrant Enforcement Actions and Anti-Immigrant Legislation and Policies

Anti-immigrant enforcement actions and anti-immigrant legislation policies have instilled fear and discouraged survivors and their children from seeking help, accessing health care coverage, obtaining food assistance, and accessing other benefits that they are entitled to receive. These actions and policies pose a risk to the health and well-being of survivors and their children as well as to the public health. They also increase suffering and compound the effects of trauma. Anti-immigrant enforcement actions must stop and existing anti-immigrant legislation and policies must be rolled-back.

Support and Enact Legislation that Creates a Pathway to Citizenship for Farmworkers, Other Essential Workers and People Without Status

Farmworkers and many people without legal status are especially vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Regrettably, 80 percent of women farmworkers reported that they experienced

some form of sexual violence on the job;² and about one-third of women farmworkers suffer domestic violence.³ Additionally, farmworkers and many people without legal status face geographic isolation; language barriers; grueling working conditions without adequate protections; and housing and food insecurity. They need access to housing, health care, public benefits, and economic supports. As essential members of families and communities all across the U.S., farmworkers and people without status need a legislative pathway to citizenship.

² Oxfam America. Working in Fear: Sexual Violence Against Women Farmworkers in the United States: A Literature Review. (2014) Available at: http://deohs.washington.edu/pnash/sites/deohs.washington.edu.pnash/files/documents/S_H_OXFAM_lit_review2014.pdf.

³ Runge, Robin R. Failing to Address Sexual and Domestic Violence at Work: The Case of Migrant Farmworker Women. (2012). *American University Journal of Gender Social Policy and Law* 20, no. 4: 871-897, at <https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1566&context=jgspl>, citing Maria L. Ontiveros. (2003). Lessons from the Fields: Female Farmworkers and the Law. 55 ME. L. REV. 171. Available at <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/234111097.pdf>.