

**Columbus Consolidated Government  
Council Meeting Agenda Item**

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Council
<b>AGENDA SUBJECT:</b>	<b>2023-2024 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Grant</b>
<b>AGENDA SUMMARY:</b>	Approval is requested to authorize the District Attorney’s Victim-Witness Assistance Program to apply for and if approved, accept a grant for \$144,246 or as otherwise awarded from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council of Georgia along with \$132,077 from the 5% Crime Victim Surcharge Fund allocated in the FY24 Budget to provide funding for Crime Victim Assistance in the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit from October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024.
<b>INITIATED BY:</b>	<b>District Attorney Victim-Witness Assistance Program</b>

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**Recommendation:** Approval is requested to authorize the District Attorney’s Victim-Witness Assistance Program to apply for and if approved, accept a grant for \$144,246 or as otherwise awarded from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council of Georgia along with \$132,077 from the 5% Crime Victim Surcharge Fund allocated in the FY24 Budget to provide funding for Crime Victim Assistance in the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit from October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024. The grant no longer requires the use of volunteers, although the use of volunteers is crucial to operations. It is requested that the multi-governmental fund be amended by the amount awarded plus the local match.

**Background:** In July of 1989, the Office of the District Attorney began operating a Crime Victim Assistance Program. In October of 1992, the Victim-Witness Assistance Program was awarded the first Crime Victim Assistance Grant, thereby broadening the program for the provision of basic services. In July of 1995, additional funds were received from the 5% Crime Victim Surcharge Fund, thus allowing the program to expand services to the 6 counties within the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit. Grant allocations since that time have sustained the program. The office currently employs a Director of Victim Services, a Program Coordinator, and 9 Victim Advocates. Five victim advocates are funded with this grant.

**Analysis:** If approved for FY24, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council of Georgia will allocate \$144,246 to Columbus Consolidated Government to support the Victim-Witness Assistance Program for the grant year October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024. The requested local match of \$132,077. The District Attorney requests Council’s authorization to utilize \$132,077 from the 5% Crime Victim Surcharge Funds, which is the total local match. The total amount of \$276,323 represents the salary, benefits, and local match for 5 Victim Advocates, management of a mental health therapy program, and allowances for required travel, training, and education.

**Financial Considerations:** The grant total is \$276,323 with the Federal allocation of \$144,246 along with \$132,077 from the 5% Crime Victim Surcharge Fund. Due to the local match in the

form of cash coming from the 5% Crime Victim Surcharge Fund, there will be no annual fiscal impact as a result of this grant.

**Legal Considerations:** Georgia Law requires the District Attorney provide extensive services, information, and notification to crime victims (O.C.G.A.-17-17-1). The District Attorney is solely and directly responsible for complying with this law as mandated by the Victims' Bill of Rights. Legislature acknowledges that this mandate places additional burdens on prosecutors and have designed laws enabling utilization of the 5% Crime Victim Surcharge Fund to assist in easing said burdens.

**Recommendation:** Authorize submission and, if approved, acceptance of a grant in the amount of \$144,246 or as otherwise awarded from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council of Georgia, along with \$132,077 from the 5% Crime Victim Surcharge Fund, to meet the legislative requirements mandated by the Victims' Bill of Rights. This action will provide funding for positions, virtual therapy and allowances for travel, training, and education. It is requested that the multi-governmental fund be amended by the amount awarded plus the local match.

**A RESOLUTION**

**NO.**

**A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE APPLICATION AND, IF APPROVED, THE ACCEPTANCE OF A VOCA GRANT OF \$144,246 OR AS OTHERWISE AWARDED FROM THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL OF GEORGIA ALONG WITH \$132,077 FROM THE 5% CRIME VICTIM ASSISTANCE SURCHARGE FUND ALLOCATED IN THE FY24 BUDGET, TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR CRIME VICTIM ASSISTANCE IN THE CHATTAHOOCHEE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT FROM OCTOBER 1, 2023 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2024, AND, AMEND THE MULTI-GOVERNMENTAL FUND BY LIKE AMOUNT.**

**WHEREAS**, the District Attorney is requesting the acceptance of a VOCA Grant in the amount of \$144,246 or as otherwise awarded to be allocated over a twelve-month period from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council of Georgia to support innocent victims of violent crime under the 1996 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), along with \$132,077 from the 5% Crime Victim Assistance Surcharge Fund allocated in the FY24 Budget for salaries, benefits, created programs, supplies; and,

**WHEREAS**, the funding will be used to provide services to crime victims throughout the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit; and,

**WHEREAS**, The District Attorney will continue to supervise the operation of the Victim-Witness Assistance Program in the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit from October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF COLUMBUS, GEORGIA, AS FOLLOWS:**

That the City Manager is hereby authorized to submit and if approved, accept a grant of \$144,246 or as otherwise awarded from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council of Georgia along with \$132,077 of the 5% Crime Victim Surcharge Funds allocated in the FY24 Budget to fund the Victim-Witness Assistance Program which will extend over a twelve-month period beginning October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024.

Introduced at a regular meeting of the Council of Columbus, Georgia held on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2023 and adopted at said meeting by the affirmative vote of ten members of said Council.

- Councilor Allen voting \_\_\_\_\_
- Councilor Barnes voting \_\_\_\_\_
- Councilor Begly voting \_\_\_\_\_
- Councilor Cogle voting \_\_\_\_\_
- Councilor Crabb voting \_\_\_\_\_
- Councilor Davis voting \_\_\_\_\_
- Councilor Garrett voting \_\_\_\_\_
- Councilor Huff voting \_\_\_\_\_
- Councilor Thomas voting \_\_\_\_\_
- Councilor Tucker voting \_\_\_\_\_