

**Columbus Consolidated Government
Council Meeting Agenda Item**

TO:	Mayor and Council
AGENDA SUBJECT:	2024-2025 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Grant – District Attorney
AGENDA SUMMARY:	Approval is requested to submit 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 FY25 Budget for the local match to provide funding for Crime Victim Assistance in the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit from October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2025. . It is requested that the multi-governmental fund be amended by the amount awarded plus the local match.
INITIATED BY:	District Attorney Victim-Witness Assistance Program

Recommendation: Approval is requested to authorize the District Attorney’s Victim-Witness Assistance Program to submit 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 FY25 Budget to provide funding for Crime Victim Assistance in the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit from October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025. 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 all 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 10 Victim Advocates. Five victim advocates are funded with this grant.

Analysis: If approved for FY25, 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, 2024, through September 30, 2025. The requested local match is \$132,077. The District Attorney requests Council’s authorization to utilize \$132,077 from the 5% Crime Victim Surcharge Funds, as the 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 to 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. The legislature acknowledges that this mandate places additional burdens on prosecutors and has designed laws enabling the utilization of the 5% Crime Victim Surcharge Fund to assist in easing said burdens.

Recommendation/Action: Approval is requested to authorize the District Attorney's Victim-Witness Assistance Program to submit 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 FY25 Budget to provide funding for Crime Victim Assistance in the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit from October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025. 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.

A RESOLUTION

NO. _____

A RESOLUTION TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION, ON BEHALF OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY AND, IF APPROVED, TO ACCEPT 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 FY25 BUDGET, TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR CRIME VICTIM ASSISTANCE IN THE CHATTAHOOCHEE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT FROM OCTOBER 1, 2024 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2025, 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 FY25 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, 2024, through September 30, 2025.

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 FY25 Budget to fund the Victim-Witness Assistance Program which will extend over a twelve-month period beginning October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025.

Introduced at a regular meeting of the Council of Columbus, Georgia held on the _____ day of _____, 2024 and adopted at said meeting by the affirmative vote of ten members of said Council.

- Councilor Allen voting _____.
- Councilor Chambers voting _____.
- Councilor Cogle voting _____.
- Councilor Crabb voting _____.
- Councilor Davis voting _____.
- Councilor Garrett voting _____.
- Councilor Hickey voting _____.
- Councilor Huff voting _____.
- Councilor Thomas voting _____.
- Councilor Tucker voting _____.