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Píma County Board of Supervisors

To: Julie Castañeda, Clerk of the Board
From: Dr. Matt Heinz, Supervisor, District 2
Date: Wednesday, October 20, 2021
RE: Item for the November 2, 2021 Agenda

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matt Heinz".

Please add the following to the November 2, 2021 Agenda:

Discussion/Action: Allocation of \$500,000 in one-time funding from Pima County to Homicide Survivors to fill gaps left from the loss of grant funding from the State of Arizona and a drop in federal Victims of Crimes Act funds, both of which have resulted in a 40% drop in Homicide Survivor's budget even as homicide rates have spiked 50% this year, rendering the organization's services more crucial to our community than ever before.



HOMICIDE SURVIVORS, INC

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October 20, 2021

HSI is experiencing unprecedented challenges in maintaining funds to meet the ongoing increase in demand for services as Pima County experiences a spike in violent crimes and homicides.

For 39 years, HSI has provided direct services at no cost to crime victims in Pima County. We have operated without utilizing tax dollars. Historically, HSI has been financed by a mix of private donations, and through grants such as Victims Of Crime Act (VOCA) and similarly managed state grants, which are funded through fines, fees, and forfeitures collected through legal action by governmental prosecutorial agencies.

Those funds started experiencing rapid reductions in deposits starting in 2016. By the end of 2019, federal and state VOCA funds no longer had sufficient dollars. As a result, HSI experienced a combined loss of over \$100,000 dollars in revenue, per year.

When Covid-19 came to our community, HSI experienced immediate and significant financial impacts. Fundraising events were cancelled. Many private funders, including small businesses, reduced or eliminated their charitable giving to HSI.

At the same time, HSI saw a more than 80% increase in requests for services. HSI diligently prepared for a “rainy day”, with more than 6 months of operating in reserves. As we rose to meet the needs of our community in service to our mission, demand quickly outgrew the capacity to grow and find resources. HSI spent \$400,000 of our reserve funds to keep things services going in Pima County. Those funds directly assisted survivors. It helped to keep them housed and fed. It helped to keep their utilities on. It funded counseling, peer support, and therapy. It provided them with an active voice in civil and criminal legal systems.

Homicides have increased more than 50% since we experienced the slash of VOCA and State funds at the end of 2019. Lockdowns, and quarantines impeded the recovery of survivors already impacted by the traumatic loss of a loved one to murder. The direct financial impact on our organization exceeds \$500,000. The bottom line is that services have increased over 80% at the same time that revenue dropped by 40%.

While the current financial situation looks grim, HSI expects to make a full financial recovery. It's the amount of time it will take, and how detrimental to services it will be that are in question. Still, there is reason to hope.

HSI participated in the Fix VOCA campaign, a national effort that was successful in identifying additional streams to improve VOCA funding. Congress approved those changes, and the fund is recovering. It is anticipated to have more available for distribution in FY 24.

HSI implemented a significantly modified and aggressive development plan, focused on creative fundraisers, like our Luz de Vida project, and strategic co-fundraising partnerships, like the efforts that are underway in collaboration with TRAK, JFCS, Tu Nidito, and others.

New grants and funding streams are being developed to further diversify HSI's funding sources.

We are proactive and are directly engaging the challenges of increasing violence in our community in bold, courageous, survivor centered ways. We are proud of our innovative partnerships with The Pima County Attorney's Office, The Pima County Sheriff's Department, and other law enforcement, prosecution, and nonprofits. Our data-based strategies for violence intervention and prevention promise a path towards a healthier and safer community for all.

HSI was encouraged when congress passed ARRP, as it appeared ideally structured to assist organizations like ours: ones who stepped up to serve a community in crisis, and who have a path toward sustainability, despite significant and unforeseen challenges.

Unfortunately, this crisis is not over. HSI has depleted its reserves in service to crime victims. To maintain its current services, HSI respectfully requests a one-time grant of \$500,000 to help bridge the gap as we realize the results of our current funding efforts. HSI believes in transparency and engagement. Should this funding be approved, we would be happy to submit regular financial statements and program overview metrics on our efforts towards sustainable recovery.

Sincerely,

James Gierke

Executive Director, Homicide Survivors, Inc.