

January 8, 2026

The Honorable Josh Shapiro  
Governor, State of Pennsylvania  
501 North 3rd Street  
508 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro and the Pennsylvania General Assembly,

On behalf of survivors of sexual assault, advocates, students, families, and communities across Pennsylvania, the undersigned statewide and local organizations respectfully urge you to address the critical funding needs of rape crisis centers throughout the Commonwealth.

For decades, state funding has been the backbone of Pennsylvania's efforts to support survivors of sexual assault, providing counseling, advocacy, prevention education, crisis hotlines, hospital accompaniment, and more. This commitment has endured across administrations and political parties. Yet today, flat funding, rising demand, and workforce instability threaten the very services survivors rely on to heal, rebuild, and seek justice. No survivor should be left waiting, and we cannot risk losing what generations have fought to build.

Pennsylvania's rape crisis centers need a \$12.5 million increase in funding to stabilize and sustain sexual assault prevention and response in the Commonwealth. Two actions are essential:

- Governor Shapiro, we respectfully urge you to include a \$12.5 million increase to the Department of Human Services (DHS) rape crisis line item in your proposed 2026-27 budget.
- The Pennsylvania General Assembly, you must support and pass a budget that includes a \$12.5M increase to the DHS rape crisis line item.

This historic investment is not optional, and without a funding increase it our state risks falling short of ensuring survivors have the care and support they deserve.

#### **Flat Funding Has Functioned as a Cut, and a \$250,000 Increase Cannot Fix It**

Since 2021, Pennsylvania's rape crisis centers have been funded at \$11.92 million, despite skyrocketing costs of wages, insurance, utilities, transportation, and other essential operating costs.

While the \$250,000 increase for FY 2025-2026 is appreciated, it amounts to just \$5,300 per center. This level of funding does not cover even a single monthly utility bill or therapy for one survivor. This is not enough to hire a full-time advocate, cover rising insurance premiums, or close service gaps. Simply put, a \$250,000 increase is neither a solution to the growing needs of programs nor enough to offset stagnant funding. Every year, flat funding has been equal to a budget cut, forcing centers to stretch already-thin resources even further as inflation and demand rise.

Workforce instability harms every survivor these programs seek to serve.

## **The Human Reality Behind the Numbers**

Behind every data point is a Pennsylvanian whose life has been changed by sexual abuse, assault, and harassment.

In FY 2024-2025, Pennsylvania's rape crisis centers served 25,214 people, 19,362 adults and 5,852 children, providing trauma-informed support when it was needed most. That same year, survivors received 119,335 hours of therapy, including 88,619 hours for adults and 30,716 hours for children.

If every Pennsylvania lawmaker met with a fraction of the survivors we saw, you each would have provided services to 67 new survivors, in just one year.

More than 12,000 Pennsylvanians called rape crisis hotlines last year because they had nowhere else to turn. That means that a survivor reached out for help every 44 minutes last year. To put that in perspective, the Governor's phone line would ring more than 30 times a day, every day, for an entire year.

Yet even as demand continues to grow, flat funding has reduced the system's ability to respond. Last year alone, staffing cuts at rape crisis centers in Lebanon and Schuylkill Counties meant:

- 242 survivors were never reached
- 2,310 hours of therapy were lost
- 3,750 children and community members lost opportunities for prevention and education trainings

When funding falls behind, survivors pay the price. They pay with longer wait times, fewer options, and lost opportunities for healing.

## **Our Request**

We respectfully urge you, Governor Shapiro, and the Pennsylvania General Assembly, to approve a \$12.5 million increase to the Rape Crisis line item to bring our total request to \$25,271,000 in the upcoming state budget.

A \$12.5 million investment will allow Pennsylvania's rape crisis centers to:

- Restore therapy hours lost to staffing cuts and reduce wait times for survivors
- Ensure 24/7 hotline coverage statewide, so no call for help goes unanswered
- Maintain medical and legal accompaniment for survivors navigating hospitals and courts
- Expand prevention education to reduce future harm and long-term costs
- Meet rising demand from adults, children, students, and families across all 67 counties
- Stabilize and retain a highly trained workforce by offering competitive, sustainable wages

This request reflects the actual cost of providing lifesaving, trauma-informed services at the scale Pennsylvanians need.



Pennsylvania Coalition to  
Advance Respect

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**a division of respect together**

## **Our Commitment**

Every name signed to this letter represents a promise already being kept. A promise to stand by, support, and protect survivors.

Across Pennsylvania, advocates answer phones in the middle of the night. They sit beside survivors in emergency rooms. They walk with children and families through unimaginable pain. They hold space for healing that cannot wait, and unfortunately, they do so while knowing that the system supporting them grows weaker each year.

Survivors have shown extraordinary courage by reaching out, telling their stories, asking for help, and choosing healing even when it feels impossible. Advocates and counselors show equal courage by showing up, again and again, often at personal cost, to ensure no one must face trauma alone.

We will continue to stand with survivors. We will continue to answer the call. But we cannot continue to do this work with shrinking resources while the need grows louder and more urgent every day. This moment calls for leadership that meets courage with action.

Governor Shapiro, Pennsylvania has an opportunity to affirm what we believe as a Commonwealth: that survivors matter, that safety and dignity are non-negotiable, and that healing should never be delayed because of funding.

We ask you to stand with the 25,000 Pennsylvanians who took the brave step of seeking support last year, and the countless others who will seek support tomorrow. With your strong leadership, we can ensure that when a survivor asks for help, the answer is not a busy signal, not a waiting list, and not silence, but a steady voice saying, *“You are not alone.”*

Sincerely,

The Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect (PCAR)  
On behalf of Pennsylvania's network of sexual assault centers

For more information, please contact Joyce Lukima, Chief Operating Officer, Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect, [jlukima@pcar-respecttogether.org](mailto:jlukima@pcar-respecttogether.org), or Gabriella Romeo, Director of Public Policy, Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect, [gromeo@pcar-respecttogether.org](mailto:gromeo@pcar-respecttogether.org).