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November 19, 2015

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 LHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

On behalf of the Daughters of Penelope, a preeminent international organization for women of Hellenic heritage and Philhellenes that sponsors and supports domestic violence centers throughout the United States, I write to urge the Committee on Appropriations to not cut funds allocated for the **Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)** as the committee works to finalize FY2016 appropriations. VOCA created the Crime Victims Fund, which serves as a mechanism to fund compensation and services for the nation's victims of crime through fines and penalties on federal criminal offenders.

The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 "rescinded and permanently cancelled" \$1.5 billion from the **Crime Victims Fund** for the purpose of utilizing it as an offset to pay for an overall increase in funding. This causes serious concern for a few reasons. First, the Crime Victims Fund contains no taxpayer dollars. It is funded largely from criminal fines. Secondly, according to the co-chairmen of the Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus, U.S. Reps. Ted Poe and Jim Costa, "not only does raiding the Crime Victims Fund violate the intent of the law, but it violates the statute itself..."

Penelope House Domestic Violence Center, Mobile, Ala., was the first domestic violence shelter established in the state of Alabama in 1979 and has been recognized by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as a leading, model shelter for others to emulate. Penelope House utilizes VOCA grant funding to provide direct services to its domestic violence victims. For example, through two annual VOCA grants, one grant funds a portion of salaries for Court Advocates and the second grant funds Domestic Violence Case Managers/Shelter Supervisor. This is especially important as Penelope House's services have been expanded to include two more counties.

We appreciated your support for crime victims in the recent past by increasing the Crime Victims Fund's cap, which was set for FY16 at \$2.7 billion as passed in the House's FY16 CJS Appropriations Bill. We ask for your continued support to ensure that the Fund's cap is set as high as possible in the final FY16 omnibus appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Connie Pilallis
Grand President

Cc: Rep. John Culberson, chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies.

Rep. Michael Honda, ranking member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies.