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Sexual Violence Advocate
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March 15, 2021

Senator Melanie Scheible, Chair
Members Senate Judiciary Committee
401 South Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Dear Chair Scheible and Members of the Committee:

Safe Embrace's mission is "We are committed to ending the cycle of domestic and sexual violence with innovative prevention and intervention services." Safe Embrace has been serving the Reno-Sparks area since 1994. The emergency shelter at Safe Embrace has been serving survivors of domestic violence in Washoe County since 2001. In 2015, Safe Embrace was recognized as a dual focus shelter serving victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault and human trafficking. Safe Embrace is the largest and most inclusive safe house with 32 beds in Reno-Sparks (accommodating male, LGBTQIA2+, and survivors with disabilities). Last year, 6,000 bed nights were provided in our safe house.

Marriage License Funding is the sole grant that supports Operational Expenses for our agency and is less restrictive than all of our federal grants. This year we have been faced with a significant deficit due to the decrease in Marriage License Funding. In Nevada, \$25.00 from every Marriage License issued goes into the Account for Aid for Victims of Domestic Violence in the State General Fund. Throughout the pandemic, the number of Marriage Licenses issued decreased by 87% which equates to roughly 2 million dollars in the state of Nevada. Safe Embrace experienced a 48% funding reduction from last fiscal year to this year.

With the onset of the pandemic and then during the stay at home order, Safe Embrace saw a 400% increase in afterhours calls. In comparison from March-October 2019 to March-October 2020, Safe Embrace experienced a 79% increase in crisis calls.

The issue of domestic and sexual violence in Reno-Sparks is extensive. Nevada has consistently ranked first in the nation for domestic violence fatalities of women (Powell, 2011). In 2018, Nevada was ranked 7th in the nation in the rate of women murdered by men as indicated in a report published by the Violence Policy Center in September of 2020. 65% of the females murdered by males in Nevada were murdered by their intimate partner.

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We are asking for support to increase the fee that is charged on every Marriage License sold in the state to benefit victims of domestic and sexual violence and their families. This increase would allow for Safe Embrace and other victim service providers to increase capacity and ensure that survivors and their children are getting the services they need to overcome the trauma they experienced.

Please consider supporting SB177 in order to ensure that victims in our state become survivors.

Sincerely,

Jessica Cisneros

Jessica Cisneros
Executive Director