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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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During Crime Victims' Rights Week, AG Kaul Highlights Funding Crisis

MADISON, Wis. – National Crime Victims' Rights Week is a time to honor and support victims of crime, identify barriers to justice, and recognize the critical services crime victims rely on. Attorney General Josh Kaul will hold roundtable discussions across the state and hear directly from victim service providers and criminal justice partners about the urgent challenges they are experiencing as a result of the significant reduction in federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding. Many programs have already been forced to cut services and staff, leaving crime victims with fewer resources.

"National Crime Victims' Rights Week is a time to remember the importance of ensuring that victims of crime have the support they need," said Attorney General Kaul. "The work of victim service providers is critical, and it must be adequately funded."

The Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) administers VOCA funding through its Office of Crime Victim Services (OCVS). However, the available federal funding has dropped significantly. For a period of five fiscal years, Wisconsin DOJ was previously able to distribute approximately \$44 million in VOCA or a combination of VOCA and American Rescue Plan Act funds annually. In the current federal fiscal year, that amount has been reduced to just \$13 million, creating a funding gap that has forced many victim service providers to scale back operations.

Wisconsin DOJ has requested a substantial state investment in the upcoming biennial budget to help address the funding gap and support critical victim services. With the decline in VOCA funding, Wisconsin DOJ's proposed budget request

includes approximately \$67.8 million in state funding over two years to support community victim service providers and maintain 17 victim service positions at DOJ. Current victim services provided by DOJ include the services available through the Safe at Home program and the Victim Resource Center.

Wisconsin DOJ urges policymakers to support efforts that ensure victims receive the services they need.