

CRIME VICTIM SERVICES COMMISSION

Meeting – May 3, 2021

MINUTES

*****Approved*****

Brian Mackie, Chairperson, called the Crime Victim Services Commission meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. on May 3, 2021 on a remote Zoom virtual meeting.

Present:

Commission Members:

William Fales
Victor Fitz
Karen Gray Sheffield
Robin Hornbuckle
Brian Mackie

Staff Members:

Jess Averill, Policy Analyst
Shalonna Banks, Departmental Analyst
Katherine Bennett, Assistant Attorney General
Michael Bobbitt, Secretary
Debi Cain, Director of Victim Services
Emily Ely, Claims Analyst
James McCurtis, CVSC Manager
Angela Povilaitis, Staff Attorney
Janine Washburn, Compensation Program Manager

Introductions were made by the Commissioners members. Mr. Mackie provided an overview of the Crime Victim Services program and explained how the remote Zoom meeting would proceed.

Approval of Agenda - Mr. Fitz made a motion, supported by Ms. Gray Sheffield to approve the May 3, 2021 agenda as written. The motion carried.

Approval of Open Session Minutes - Ms. Gray Sheffield made a motion, supported by Ms. Hornbuckle to approve the open session minutes from the February 22, 2021 meeting as written. The motion carried.

Staff Report - Ms. Povilaitis reported on HB 4674 and 4675, which are part of a larger package of bills, HB 4670 - 4677. This package of bills was introduced on April 21, 2021 and has been marketed as the “Safer Michigan Act”. HB 4674 and 4675 are specifically related to compensation statute changes. These bills would significantly alter who is eligible to file victim compensation claims as well as the types of claims that would be covered. They also appear to eliminate the current “payor of last resort” requirement which has been important in preserving funding for the compensation program.

HB 4674 and 4675 would amend the Crime Victim Compensation Statute by changing the definition to expand beyond personal physical injury and include emotional and mental injury. This along with other expansions would impact the ability to obtain, seek and spend federal matching dollars. Currently the Crime Victim Compensation program is designed in a manner to cover claims that are all included in federal match. If this changes, a significant loss of federal match could occur and the ability to use that match money to cover claims could also be lost. This could have serious implications on the ability of the compensation fund to sustain itself and serve crime victims in Michigan.

The Crime Victim Compensation program is required to comply with certain federal guidelines to receive matching federal funds. Matching federal funds provide a substantially greater amount of money. Within the Crime Victims Fund, there are many categories of funds, but the Compensation Fund is the one fund that directly goes to victims, so it is very important.

Ms. Povilaitis read a letter aloud to the Commission members to legislators titled “What You Need to Know About the Un-Safer Michigan Act” regarding HB 4670-4677. Ms. Povilaitis asked the Commission if they wished to sign on to the letter along with a larger coalition. Other potential signers would include victim advocates, prosecutors, law enforcement and others which have concerns with HB 4670-4677.

Mr. Fitz made a motion, supported by Ms. Hornbuckle to oppose HB 4674 and 4675 as written and agree to sign on to a letter with a larger coalition, as well as write a separate letter directly from the Crime Victim Services Commission, expressing opposition to HB 4674-4675. The motion carried.

Public Comment - Kathy Hagenian submitted a comment on behalf of the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence (MCEDSV) thanking the Crime Victims² Rights Commission for convening today’s special meeting to discuss these critical issues. The MCEDSV shares the concerns raised by the Commission and staff during this thorough and thoughtful dialogue. MCEDSV supports the collective action being coordinated by advocacy groups and supports the motion the Commission is currently considering. The comment was signed by Elinor Jordan and Kathy Hagenian.

Report of the Members - Mr. Mackie suggested that Commission members read about Leslie Allen Williams, who is an example of the type of criminal which led the legislature to adopt Truth in Sentencing laws. Leslie Allen Williams was a clearly dangerous convict released from prison before his time, and it led to many unnecessary deaths.

Unfinished Business - None.

New Business – None.

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for May 17, 2021.

Ms. Gray Sheffield made a motion, supported by Dr. Fales, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 10:19 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Bobbitt