

Utah Domestic Violence Coalition

Advocate • Collaborate • Educate

Please support HB 238 (Romero) to dedicate \$35 from each marriage license fee to core domestic violence shelter services statewide.

Background: Representative Romero authored HB238 to amend Utah statute 17-16-21, changing an optional marriage license fee of \$10 to a mandatory fee of \$35. Revenue from this fee is currently statutorily restricted for the use of domestic and sexual violence services and is designated for administration by DCFS who currently passes this funding through on contract to UDVC member programs throughout Utah.

Our statewide network of private non-profit victim service organizations throughout Utah use this funding to collectively provide over 100,000 nights of emergency shelter and a range of supportive services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

HB238 Will Save Lives: While most states have 40 or more victim service providers, because of limited funding, currently, only 13 private shelters serve 29 counties in Utah. Our programs are continually at capacity, leaving hundreds of survivors and children at risk every single day. We are struggling to keep up with the need. Based on the data of the Utah Department of Health and the National Violent Death Reporting System:

- Since 2000, 42% of Utah's homicides are domestic violence related.
- 39% of DV-related homicides include the suicide of the perpetrator.
- Every year, at least 80 of Utah's children witness their mother's murder or attempted murder by an intimate partner
- 63% of homeless women and 40% of homeless families in Utah are victims of domestic violence.
- 70% of IPV homicide victims were killed within the first 72 hours following departure from an abusive partner; 65% of those DV victims had open DCFS cases at the time of their murder.



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HB238 Will Save Community Resources:

- Sexual assault costs Utah an estimated \$4.9 billion in one year¹
 - Costs include: Law enforcement and court costs, medical care, mental health services, unplanned pregnancy, STIs, rape-induced substance abuse, suicidal behavior, self-harming behavior, property damage, pain and suffering, and loss of quality of life
 - Victims of assault and violence are at higher risk for negative mental health conditions, including suicidality.
 - Victims are at higher risk of addiction, often using substances as an escape or to self-medicate, attempting to cope with the symptoms of trauma and associated feelings of shame.
 - Academic performance suffers and GPA influences academic retention for survivors of abuse and violence.
 - Loss of productivity for victims in the workplace.
 - Loss of tax revenue from lost income, impacting the economy.
 - Higher rates of overall chronic health conditions. ²
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HB238 Will Have Measureable Outcomes:

We know risk of re-assault decreases significantly and prosecution rates improve when a high-risk survivor engages in comprehensive domestic violence services with a trained victim advocate. Please help us make that more accessible. Supporting our programming not only saves public resources, it saves lives. In partnership with our state agencies, UDVC is demonstrating outcomes of improved safety including:

- Survivor's ability to improve safety and financial independence
- Survivor's ability to engage in community resources
- Reduction in re-assault for survivors (60% reduction)
- Reduction in statewide lethal intimate partner violence rates (30% reduction over 5 years)
- Improved collaboration with first responders and victim advocates

¹ Utah Department of Health, Violence and Injury Prevention Program "Cost of Sexual Violence Report", 2105.

² Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., . . . Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), 245-258.