Subject: **Show Survivors They Matter This SAAM – Sexual Assault Awareness Month**

Dear [Senator/Representative XX],

[My name is XXXXX and I am an advocate/therapist/educator/supporter/client of Resilience,] an independent non-profit based in Chicago, dedicated to the healing and empowerment of sexual assault survivors through crisis intervention counseling, individual and group trauma therapy, and medical and legal advocacy. I am reaching out to you directly because I am a constituent in your district.

As you may know, April is **Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)**. This year, SAAM comes at a timely juncture for Illinois, given devastating cuts in our state’s Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding in FY24 that will *significantly* impact every rape crisis center in the state and in turn, survivors in your district.

The budget introduced by Governor Pritzker in February includes funding for organizations like Resilience at the same level as last year’s budget; *before* the massive cuts rape crisis centers like Resilience now face as a result of VOCA cuts. **In this proposed budget, rape crisis centers in Illinois will be $12M short of what they need to function to adequately pay their staff and most importantly, support survivors. Without adequate funding, organizations like Resilience will be forced to halt lifesaving 24-hour services to survivors of sexual assault and abuse. Many survivors will go months without support or the follow-up assistance they need.**

In the last 20 years, rape crisis services have only received an increase of $2.3 million in General Revenue funding. All while the cost of living and inflation has soared higher. Last year rape crisis centers served 21,928 survivors across Illinois. At current funding levels, this equates to $365 per survivor served in Illinois; a vastly inadequate amount high-lighting a longstanding equity issue in the Illinois budget. **I urge you to consider both the short- and long-term implications inadequate funding could have on survivors and the state of Illinois and support a $12M increase to sexual assault services in General Revenue funding in the FY24 budget.** An increase to $20 million, means the invaluable 24-hour counseling and advocacy services survivors receive is only costing the state approximately $900 per survivor.

In addition to this request, I encourage you to also join us in a [calendar of events for SAAM](https://www.ourresilience.org/get-involved/sexual-assault-awareness-month-2/). Please take note of the event on Friday, **April 28th at 12:00 PM in Daley Plaza - Standing Silent Witness**. Every year, Resilience community members, advocates, volunteers, and survivors gather silently for one hour in Daley Plaza sharing stories and messages protesting sexual violence and rape culture with t-shirts, signs, and more. Your attendance would show invaluable support for survivors of sexual violence and help to draw attention to the resources organizations like Resilience need to remain available 24 hours a day for survivors across the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. I look forward to your support in showing survivors their safety and healing matters to elected officials here in Illinois.

Sincerely,