Iowa Coalition For Collective Change – Iowa’s homicide and violent crime services coalition requests the legislature to:

**Appropriate $2.5 million dollars for critical advocacy services to survivors of homicide and other violent crimes.**

* **Violent crime is on the rise.** In Iowa the number of homicides in the first six months of 2020 surpassed the number of homicides in all of 2019.
* **Iowans who experience violence deserve immediate and long term critical services.** The community deserves a fair appropriation for critical services that include, personal, medical and legal advocacy, research, court attendance, transportation to and from hearings, lodging during trials, funeral arrangement assistance, information and referrals, emotional support, family and individual counseling, and information on crime victim rights among others.
* **VOCA funds will be cut approximately $4 to 5 million dollars in Iowa. The state must invest in victims now.** Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds are the ONLY source of funding for homicide and other violent crime advocacy services. The VOCA fund has sustained a drastic cut which amounts to approximately $4 to 5 million dollars in Iowa. Without these funds the few funded services that are currently in place in Iowa, are in danger of disappearing placing further burden on survivors of homicide and violent crime to navigate the complications and trauma of victimization alone.
* **Victim Services work is a critical part of criminal justice reform.** Victims of crime and the advocates who serve them have the personal experiences that define the gaps, barriers and inconsistencies**.** *Survivors are the clients of the criminal justice system.* You cannot reform a system without the voices and input of the clients.
* **Currently the State of Iowa appropriates $5 million dollars to services for survivors of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and ZERO dollars to services for survivors of homicide and violent crime.** The few advocacy services that are funded in the state of Iowa are funded with FEDERAL DOLLARS ONLY. The state has a responsibility to invest in the services survivors say help them the most.
* **Homicide and violent crime disproportionately affects the Black community.** ⅓ of homicide victims in the State of Iowa are Black. There are currently no initiatives funded by the state dedicated to eliminating this disparity.
* **The Black community regularly conducts victim service work that goes unspoken, unrecognized and unpaid.** In the last 12 months, hundreds of hours and several sources of community funds have been utilized to provide services to the families of Breasia Teller, Abdi Shariff, Michael williams, Emmanuel Martin Nyariel, Majok Martin Nyariel and Zacharia Warsame among others who never made the news. This work should be recognized, certified and resourced. The lack of funding for critical victim services to these survivors makes a strong negative statement that Black people in Iowa are not safe or valued.
* **Invest in Research and Innovative services developed by Iowans.** BIPOC communities by conducting victim services for their families, neighbors and friends have developed best practices in homicide and violent crime services, including strategies of prevention and intervention of homicides and violent crimes. By investing in the expansion of these activities we will be creating models with the potential to save lives and expedite healing.