



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

# **After Year-Long Fight, Kennedy Secures \$300,000 In State Funding for Crisis Services, Reverses Catastrophic Cuts to Vital Support Programs**

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*Kennedy: Crisis Services Too Important to Risk – New Funding Stream Will Ensure Victims Get Support They Need*

*Albany Heard Voices Of Over 2,000 Who Signed Petition Demanding Restoration of Funding*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy announced today the securing of \$300,000 for Crisis Services, reversing damaging cuts that had been proposed by the New York State Office of Victim Services (OVS). Kennedy joined Crisis Services' fight in August 2014, repeatedly demanding that OVS reverse their decision, and organizing a petition drive that gathered over 2,000 signatures. In budget negotiations this year, Kennedy made the restoration of this funding, which has been received for the past 20 years, a top priority, lobbying colleagues on both sides of the aisle. This new funding stream will help to ensure that Crisis Services is able to continue to serve victims of domestic violence, just as they have done since 1968. Currently, Crisis Services offers support to over 8,000 local victims of violent crime.

The loss in funding that the organization faced would have resulted in the elimination of all support for the Advocate Program's longstanding domestic violence response efforts, leaving victims without an advocate to help them through traumatic experiences. The loss of this funding also resulted in the removal of all domestic violence case managers and advocates that are currently stationed in the Buffalo Police Department and Buffalo city Court. This vital partnership with the

criminal justice system helps victims confront the challenges, difficulties and fears associated with criminal investigation and court trials.

“Since my first day in office, I have made the protection of those who are in need, of our most vulnerable, a main focus of mine,” said Senator Kennedy. “The idea that the Office of Victim Services could cut \$300,000 in funding to one of Western New York’s most important programs was an outrage, and I made it a top priority in budget negotiations to get that funding restored. The support that is offered by Crisis Services is second-to-none, and it would have been a true shame for them to be forced to scale back their operations. With this funding, we can rest easy knowing that victims of domestic violence will continue to get the top-quality support that they need and deserve.”

“On behalf of Crisis Services, I want to offer my sincere thanks to Senator Kennedy for his hard work,” said Advocate Program Director Robyn Wiktorski-Reynolds. “Without this funding, we would not be able to offer this critical support that our clients need. We proudly serve victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and any other Western New York resident who is experiencing a personal, emotional or mental health crisis. As we recognize Sexual Assault Awareness Month this April, I am deeply grateful that the senator recognizes the importance of this funding, which will ensure that our important work continues.”

Crisis Services is also one of Western New York’s only providers of free trauma-based therapy services. Because this support is offered free of charge, this greatly increases the accessibility of necessary therapy services for low-income families and individuals. The potential funding loss put these services at risk.

Additionally, the funding loss put Crisis Services’ status as Upstate New York’s most comprehensive crisis center in jeopardy. It would have impacted their ability to carry out the lifesaving work they perform throughout the community each day. The organization also operates a 24-hour hotline that provides suicide prevention services, and offers help to anyone experiencing a personal, emotional, or mental health crisis.

“This is an organization that has served the people of Western New York for nearly fifty years,” said Kennedy. “When they came to my office seeking assistance, we knew right away that this was a fight that we simply could not afford to lose. This funding restoration has sent a clear message to Albany: Crisis Services is too

important, and the people of Western New York will stand up to protect it.”

If you or someone you know is in crisis, there is always help. The Crisis Services 24-hour hotline is available at (716) 834-3131.