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Dear Chairwoman Barbara L'Italian, Chairwoman Danielle Gregoire, and members of the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs or simple the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support to improve the Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC) bill, An Act relative to assisting elders and people with disabilities in the Commonwealth ([House Bill 2077/Senate Bill 2039](#)).

This is a pertinent issue to many survivors of sexual violence and their families that the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC) through our case management program works with on a regular basis. With over 6000 EAEDC recipients in our service area, the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center provides free, confidential support and services to survivors of sexual violence ages 12 and up and their families and friends. We work with survivors regardless of when the violence occurred, and our goal is to empower survivors to heal. We also work with a wide range of organizations and communities, including schools, colleges, and police, to advocate for change. We provide training in how to respond to survivors and create cultures that prevent sexual violence in the first place.

Sexual violence does create lasting economic and health impacts sometimes making it inevitable for survivors to seek avenue through transitional benefits like EAEDC. For survivors of sexual violence who are struggling economically, the lack of choices often traps them in unsafe situations and relationships in which they may be dependent on their perpetrator for basic goods, such as shelter, food, medicine, transportation, healthcare, childcare, and others (Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape).

It is common for the survivors we work with at BARCC to be stuck in dire unsafe situations due to lack of realistic options to turn to for haven making them more susceptible to being revictimized.

According to Pennsylvania Coalition against Rape (2007), living in poverty makes it difficult for one to change their environment and create surroundings encompassed by safety.

Not surprisingly and sadly at BARCC, we observe that survivors accessing the current limited EAEDC grant are usually facing enormous barriers to stability including homelessness, safety concerns, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), substance use to cope with sexual trauma making stability and healing much more complex. The self blame, shame, hopelessness, fear, societal stigma for these survivors is enormous yet the service and resource options that they need and deserve are far out of reach.

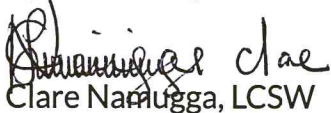
The cost to the commonwealth in spending on various programs that survivors seek to address substance use, homelessness and housing instability, mental health and general health

care needs is also exacerbated by the lack of economic power for survivors on the current insignificant EAEDC grant amount that has not improved for several years. This is definitely a worthwhile investment for the commonwealth.

The opportunity to improve the EAEDC program will create better and realistic pathways for low income and homeless survivors of violence including sexual violence. It will enable them to continue to venture for better economic opportunities. It will increase their capacity to seek more comprehensive support and services to begin to rebuild their lives. The commonwealth cannot go wrong with this economic and health initiative and investment in its own vulnerable yet deserving citizens.

Thank you for your utmost consideration to improve the EAEDC program.

Appreciatively,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clare Namugga". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Clare Namugga, LCSW

Senior Case Manager

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center(BARCC)