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February 8, 2019

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Talia Lomax-O'dneal
 Director of Finance
 Metro Courthouse
 1 Public Square – Suite 106
 Nashville TN 37201

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Dear Ms. Lomax-O'dneal,

Please accept this letter of application for Direct Appropriations funding in the amount of 180,000 to enable the Sexual Assault Center (headquartered in Nashville) to expand desperately needed services for the care and treatment of sexually violated children, adolescents, and adults in cities, suburbs, and rural communities throughout Davidson County and the Middle Tennessee region. Specifically, these monies, in conjunction with SAC operational funds, will be used to expand direct services in therapy and advocacy by 13% and targeted outreach and prevention services to underserved populations within Davidson County by 66%. We share Mayor Briley's commitment to make Nashville a safer city by providing vital counseling and advocate services to survivors of sexual assault and by implementing best practices of prevention to stop sexual violence before it ever happens. The Direct Appropriations we seek, in combination with the federal grants we compete to secure, non-government fees for services, insurance, and the donations we raise in the community, are critically important to our ability to serve the burgeoning demand we see daily from the people of Nashville and Davidson County.

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For four decades, the Sexual Assault Center (SAC) has operated as the only nonprofit in Middle Tennessee that exclusively provides therapy, advocate services, and prevention programs to victim-survivors of sexual assault, sexual abuse, and sexual violence. In 40 years of operation from our home in Nashville, SAC has provided care and services to more than 27,000 individuals of all ages, races, backgrounds, identities, abilities, languages, and income levels. Half of these are children. In the past year alone, SAC provided therapy and advocate services to 1247 clients—an 88% increase over the previous year. More than 60% of our clients live in Davidson County and the remainder travel to receive services from 16 counties throughout Middle Tennessee. Clients range in age from 2 – 76; 84% are female and 16% are male; 73% are Caucasian, 12% Hispanic/Latino, 10% African-American, and 5% multi-racial. In the past 12 months, therapists provided 11,933 individual and group counseling sessions. Trained volunteers responded to 2,519 calls to SAC's 24/7 crisis line. Victim advocates provided free assistance to 711 clients on issues ranging from navigating the criminal justice system, finding community support options, and making legal referrals. English- and Spanish-speaking volunteers and staff made 133 medical accompaniments with victim-survivors.

Our services are vital to survivors—more than 80% of whom are sexually abused children or adults who were sexually violated in childhood—because the effects of assault are compounded over time when high quality, professional treatment is unavailable.

Please consider supporting our work by remembering the Sexual Assault Center in your will.

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When a child experiences sexual abuse, the trauma affects their ability to develop emotionally, psychologically, academically, and socially. The lasting effects of untreated sexual assault often include depression, anxiety, mental health issues including PTSD, self-harm, substance abuse, lost wages due to absences from work, sleep disorders and stress on family, friends, and communities.

A dramatic increase in the demand for sexual assault services in the past year resulted when survivors of rape were afforded a new option for medical/legal examinations in Nashville/Davidson County. For the past 25 years, Nashville General Hospital was the only site where rape kits were performed. In 2016, a community-wide Mayoral Task Force was convened to design a system to provide expert and reliable sexual assault forensic exams to rape survivors in Nashville/Davidson County with trauma-informed care in a non-hospital center. SAC served on the Task Force along with representatives from the Mayor's Office, Nashville General Hospital, Metro Nashville Police Department, the District Attorney's Office, Our Kids, the Office of Family Safety, Vanderbilt, Skyline Medical Center, St. Thomas, the Victim Intervention Program, the Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence and many others. Following more than a year of extensive research on best practices, visiting other sites around the country and hosting meetings with experts serving rape survivors, it was determined that Nashville/Davidson County needed a non-hospital option and that the Sexual Assault Center was the organization of choice to provide specialized care working through a partner-based collaborative arrangement that effectively integrates a cross-section of community partners from the areas of law enforcement, medical services, the legal system, and victim advocate services. The Board of Directors of SAC agreed to raise \$2,500,000—exclusively from private donations—to remodel our existing building to house and operate the SAFE Clinic that opened in 2018. No local government funds were involved in the creation or operation of the SAFE Clinic.

Beginning in Fall 2018, SAC opened the doors of the SAFE (Sexual Assault Forensic Examination) Clinic—a national model of excellence that provides medical/legal exams (commonly known as rape kits) to victim-survivors that offers trauma-informed and victim-centered care in a non-hospital setting. While it was projected that the SAFE Clinic would serve up to 75 victim-survivors in its first year of operation, the demand has dramatically outdistanced that expectation. In the first five months since opening, the SAFE Clinic has already provided medical/legal exams and advocate services to 76 survivors (71 women and 5 men) and we now project that up to 187 clients will require our services by the end of 2019.

SAC secures federal and state grants for therapy, advocacy, and prevention services, generates earned income from its investments and raises private donations from philanthropic individuals, corporate sponsorships, and charitable foundations. However, the surging demand for sexual assault therapy, advocate services, prevention, and medical/legal exams (rape kits) has grown exponentially with the #MeToo Movement, scandals involving child sexual abuse by priests and clergy, campus rape incidents, and daily media coverage of sexual harassment in the workplace. SAC works continuously to address a waiting list of three to six months for more than 106 Spanish- and English-speaking sexual assault survivors (including 17 children) in need of placement with an individual therapist.

Please consider supporting our work by remembering the Sexual Assault Center in your will.

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In the interim, SAC provides immediate and ongoing care for these victim-survivors through crisis support, advocate services, assistance with the legal, medical and community support systems, and group therapy until each survivor can be placed with their own therapist.

Not only will Direct Appropriations funding enable SAC to better serve greater numbers of citizens in a caring, equitable, and trauma-informed manner but it will stand as a demonstrable example of the power of community-based partnerships among the police, the District Attorney's Office, health care institutions, the academic community, and providers of victim services in the public and nonprofit sectors. The SAFE Clinic in Nashville has already garnered attention from other cities and states seeking to replicate the successful collaboration that is the hallmark of trauma-informed, victim-centered care. Among the states that have already reached out to learn more about our work in Nashville-Davidson County are representatives from Michigan, Texas, and North Carolina. We are honored that the SAFE Clinic is being recognized as a national leader in best practices of trauma-informed care for rape survivors and that other cities are seeking SAC's counsel so that they can follow Nashville's example.

The work of the Sexual Assault Center—whether in the areas of therapy, advocate services, prevention or the SAFE Clinic—is predicated upon this principle: Clients who come to us receive the care they need, not the care they can afford. Age, gender, race, socio-economic level, native language, status and identity present no barrier to equitable care. Our commitment to those who have been sexually violated is best expressed in these words: We believe you. This is not your fault. We are here to help. That enduring commitment to survivors is why we do this extremely difficult and richly rewarding work in the Nashville community we call home.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, the 44-member staff of the Sexual Assault Center, our volunteers and, most especially, the clients we serve, thank you for allowing us to submit this request for Direct Appropriations funding. These funds will enable us to provide 200+ sexual assault forensic examinations to rape victims, to deliver 15,000 therapy and advocate counseling sessions to children, adolescent and adult survivors, and to provide targeted outreach to 50,000 individuals in the African-American, Hispanic, LGBTQ+, and immigrant communities as well as schools, colleges, and universities. We are grateful for your consideration of our request for \$180,000 so that we can provide professional and equitable care to victim-survivors in Nashville/Davidson County and Middle Tennessee.

Sincerely,

Rachel C. Freeman, LCSW
President and CEO

C: Dennise Meyers, Assistant to Director of Finance
Vaughn Wilson, Administrative Services Manager – Grants and Accountability

Please consider supporting our work by remembering the Sexual Assault Center in your will.