**Statutory/Policy Changes to Enhance Victims’ Rights**

**Victims’ Rights Ombudsman:** establish a specialty within Iowa’s ombudsman office to investigate complaints from crime victims about decisions and actions of criminal justice professionals. The office could also provide data to inform legislators about needed modifications to Iowa’s victims’ rights statute.

**Victims’ rights in criminal justice system – improve understanding, access, enforcement:** Promote trauma-informed education and training of criminal justice system professionals to encourage better understanding of the crime victim experience and to ensure a victim-informed approach to prosecution. For example, enact changes to deter dual arrests, prohibit arrest of victims for protection order violations, and deter victim intimidation or coercion. Improve outreach and education to improve victims’ awareness, access, and understanding of rights, including victim notification and available services. Amend Iowa law to allow a cause of action for victims when rights are violated.

**Employment & Economic Security:** Support policies to bolster employment security and eliminate barriers to financial independence. Advance paid time off and family leave policies; at least protect against employer retaliation against crime victims for taking time off to attend court proceedings, protective order hearings or for health appointments related to the victimization, e.g. amend Iowa law to ensure all crime victims, not just witnesses, have employment protections. Additionally, crime victims, including victims of domestic and sexual violence, have an acute need for timely access to health care and economic support services (Medicaid, nutrition assistance, public housing) to help them recover. Barriers to accessing housing, health care, and safety-net programs make it harder for victims to meet basic needs.

**Housing Security:** Advance policies that enable victims to obtain and maintain affordable housing, e.g. amend Iowa housing law to specifically allow for early lease termination and lease bifurcation for victims of violent crime. Proactively enforce anti-discrimination policies to ensure victims are not penalized for the actions of the person who caused them harm.

**Immigrant crime victims:** Establish a statewide standard for issuing U visa certifications so immigrant survivors of violent crime are not denied access to safety based on where they live. Promote education and training of criminal justice system professionals regarding legal protections available in current law.

**Invest in victims – ensure equity in access to rights and comprehensive services:** provide $6.7 million in funding for victim services to better address the unmet need for comprehensive services; enforce anti-discrimination protections enshrined in Iowa civil rights law to ensure no crime victim is denied access to services.