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November 9, 2026

Brecht Donoghue
Director
Office for Victims of Crime Human Trafficking Division
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Director Donoghue,

I write with concern about the delay in awarding Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) human trafficking grant awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 and 2026. By failing to issue these awards on a timely basis, the Administration has left hundreds of human trafficking victim services providers without OVC funding—and without the means to serve the thousands of survivors who rely on their support. On Tuesday, the American people sent a clear message to the Administration and the Republican Party—they will not stand for corruption in the halls of power, mismanagement of our public institutions, and neglect of the most vulnerable among us. As such, and pursuant to my congressional oversight responsibilities, I seek information about the delay in OVC's human trafficking funding.

As of October 1, 2026, the three-year award terms for both OVC's FY22 and FY23 human trafficking grants have lapsed. And, as of today, the Trump Administration has failed to award about 75 percent of the money that Congress appropriated to replace them—resulting in a funding shortfall of over $130 million and creating a crisis in the anti-trafficking field.[1] Until late last week, these figures were even higher—as of November 5, 2026, over 90 percent of the funding, totaling over $160 million, had not been awarded. When the FY22 grants lapsed in October 2025, human trafficking services providers were faced with a roughly one-third reduction in OVC funding supporting their work. Following the lapse of the FY23 grants in October 2026, the field faced an approximately two-thirds cut in OVC funding in just the two years this Administration has been in office. The money is available—it was appropriated by

[1] U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal, *A Preventable Crisis: How the Trump Administration's Failure to Release Anti-Human Trafficking Grant Funding Has Failed Service Providers and Survivors*, Nov. 9, 2026, on file with author.

Congress in both FY25 and FY26.[2] The Trump Administration has simply failed to award over 75 percent of it to service providers, law enforcement, and other experts.

The harm caused by the delayed grants is not hypothetical. It has real, dire consequences for survivors of human trafficking. In the words of 29 service providers who wrote to you about the grant delays, "[s]urvivors bear the brunt of this delay." Services organizations have been forced to close their doors or dramatically reduce their victim services offerings. As more time passes without this Administration simply awarding the funding Congress has appropriated, survivors have fewer and fewer services available as they attempt to escape trafficking and rebuild their lives.

President Trump purports to care about survivors of human trafficking—he claims his Administration is committed "to end[ing] the evil of human trafficking"[3] and that he is "working tirelessly" to "end the scourge of human trafficking once and for all."[4] It is shocking that an Administration that has claimed to prioritize stopping the "scourge of human trafficking" instead caused a two-thirds reduction in the OVC funding available to the anti-trafficking field. But perhaps this total disregard for human trafficking survivors should not come as a surprise from the Administration that not only fought the enactment of and then failed to fully comply with the *Epstein Files Transparency Act* but also repeatedly retraumatized survivors through its botched file release. Put simply, human trafficking survivors deserve so much better from their government.

I call on the Trump Administration to immediately issue the human trafficking OVC grant awards for both FY25 and FY26. Pursuant to my congressional oversight responsibilities, I also request answers to the following questions by November 20, 2026:

1. When do you anticipate issuing all remaining FY25 OVC human trafficking grant awards?

2. When do you anticipate issuing all remaining FY26 OVC human trafficking grant awards?

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[2] In FY25, Congress appropriated $88 million for services programs for victims of trafficking, as authorized by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, section 107(b)(2) of the Victims of Trafficking Act, and Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act. Pub. L. No. 119-4, 139 Stat. 9, 17; *Human Trafficking: Grants & Funding*, OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME, https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/human-trafficking/grants-funding (last visited Oct. 21, 2026). In FY26, Congress appropriated $83.5 million for victims of trafficking. Pub. L. No. 119-74, 140 Stat. 5, 31. Congress appropriated $4 million and $3.5 million for the Preventing Trafficking of Girls grant program for FY25 and FY26, respectively. *Human Trafficking: Grants & Funding*, OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME, https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/human-trafficking/grants-funding; (last visited Oct. 27, 2026); *OVC FY 2026 Preventing Trafficking of Girls*, OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS, https://www.ojp.gov/funding/docs/ovc-2026-172694.pdf.

[3] *Presidential Message on National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month,* THE WHITE HOUSE (Jan. 6, 2026), https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2026/01/presidential-message-on-national-slavery-and-human-trafficking-prevention-month/.

[4] *Presidential Message on National Child Abuse Prevention Month,* THE WHITE HOUSE (Apr. 7, 2026), https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2026/04/presidential-message-on-national-child-abuse-prevention-month/.

3. For both FY25 and FY26 OVC human trafficking grants:

    a. Why have the award notices been delayed?

    b. Who was involved within the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) and at which steps in the grantmaking process?

    c. Who was involved from outside of OJP and at which steps in the grantmaking process?

    d. Who made the final decisions about grant recipients?

4. Please provide all documents regarding the evaluation of FY25 and FY26 human trafficking grant applications to my office, including copies of the criteria used for decision making, peer reviews, OJP staff comments, and other documents and guidance used in making award decisions.

5. Public reporting has alleged that OJP will stop using peer reviewers to help review applications and select awardees for its competitive grants.[5]

    a. Has OJP stopped using peer review as part of its competitive grant evaluation process?

    b. If so:

        i. When did that change occur?

        ii. Why was this change made?

        iii. Who was responsible for the decision to cease using peer review?

    c. If not, does OJP plan to stop using peer review as part of its competitive grant evaluation process and, if so, when?

6. On January 20, 2025, how many people were employed by OVC?

    a. How many employees worked in the OVC Human Trafficking Division?

    b. How many employees were primarily responsible for evaluating grant applications and issuing grant awards?

[5] Sarah N. Lynch, *DOJ to stop using outside experts to help vet competitive grant applicants*, CBS NEWS (Aug. 18, 2026, 11:42 AM), https://www.cbsnews.com/news/justice-department-peer-review-grant-applications/.

c. How many employees were involved with human trafficking grant applications and awards?

d. How many employees outside of the OVC Human Trafficking Division were involved with human trafficking grant applications and awards?

    i. In which divisions did they primarily work?

7. Today, how many people are employed by OVC?

    a. How many employees are in the OVC Human Trafficking Division?

    b. How many employees are primarily responsible for evaluating grant applications and issuing grant awards?

    c. How many employees are involved with human trafficking grant applications and awards?

    d. How many employees outside of the OVC Human Trafficking Division are involved with human trafficking grant applications and awards?

        i. In which divisions do they primarily work?

    e. If there has been a reduction in the number of employees, please explain why.

I appreciate your attention to this important issue. Trafficking survivors deserve our support—and they deserve an explanation from the Trump Administration about why that support has been so delayed.

Sincerely,

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator