

SAFE at Last: Victims of abuse throughout the Kentucky will not see cuts in services thanks to “pension fix” bill

KY legislature passes HB8, which provides a plan for the state's quasi-agencies to remain in state retirement program.

FRANKFORT, KY, USA, March 12, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Both the Kentucky House of Representatives and Senate have unanimously voted to pass HB8, a bill providing a long-awaited, permanent “pension fix” for the state's quasi-government agencies, the majority of which provide essential social services such as emergency shelter and supportive services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse.

For several years, these quasi-government agencies, including the Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs, and the Children's Advocacy Centers of Kentucky, and many of their member programs have shouldered the burden of Frankfort's broken pension system by paying exorbitant rates on retirement costs. These cumbersome expenses threatened the long-term solvency of agencies that provide state-mandated, life-saving services to our most vulnerable citizens.

House Bill 8 puts an end to this dilemma.

Instead of calculating what services to cut or shelters to close, leaders of organizations serving abuse victims will be empowered to directly invest in the health and support systems of Kentucky's most vulnerable citizens, maintaining a strong statewide network of shelters and services that protect and nurture survivors.

“Our General Assembly has affirmed the value and dignity of survivors of domestic violence,” says Angela Yannelli, CEO for the Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence. “Without a permanent plan to end the year-by-year patchwork fix for the burdensome retirement rates that quasi-agencies like ourselves shouldered for years, some of our services and shelters--and that means individual lives--were in danger. Now, we will be able to strengthen and enhance programs that directly benefit survivors and their families. Lives will be changed, and likely saved, because of HB8 passing today. We are overjoyed and thankful for this news.”

Eileen Recktenwald, Executive Director of the Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs, echoed Yannelli's sentiment.

"We are grateful to the legislature for their unceasing support of rape crisis services for the citizens of the Commonwealth," says Recktenwald.

Caroline Ruschell, Executive Director of the Child Abuse Centers of Kentucky cites lawmakers' willingness to listen and learn about the plight of child abuse in Kentucky, which is the worst in the nation, as a key factor in the bill's success.

"Our state representatives have dedicated a tremendous amount of time and effort to understanding the challenges our Children's Advocacy Centers face by participating in KERS," says Ruschell. "I am tremendously grateful for their commitment to this issue and to the services we provide to child victims of abuse and their families."

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