

TO: BOARD OF LEGISLATORS
COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER

Your Committee recommends passage of “An Act establishing a program to assist with dwelling safety measures for survivors of domestic violence.”

Your Committee recognizes that survivors of domestic and gender-based violence may face situations where they are unable to secure their homes. As such, survivors of domestic and gender-based violence are often driven from their homes when their abusers have keys or access to their dwellings. These situations are extremely dangerous, not only for the survivors, but also for any children in their care.

Your Committee acknowledges that domestic violence has been found to be one of the top drivers of homelessness. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, during just one day in 2015, over 31,500 adults and children fleeing domestic violence found refuge in domestic violence emergency shelters or transitional housing programs, and on that same day, domestic violence programs were unable to meet over 12,197 requests for services because of a lack of funding, staffing, or other resources. Sixty-three percent (7,728) of unmet requests were for housing. Survivors of domestic and gender-based violence should not be put into positions where a lack of security and safety is forcing them to leave their home. Instead, survivors of domestic and gender-based violence should be given the ability to stay in their homes and rebuild their lives in their own communities.

Your Committee has been advised that the goal of this proposed Act is to enable survivors of domestic and gender-based violence to stay in their homes and communities, if they so choose. To

ensure the choice to remain in one's home is available to survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, this Act will establish a program that offers free lock changes and installation of a home security camera at a survivor's dwelling. Under the program, the Westchester County Office for Women will contract and work with designated community-based organizations to administer the program. One or more designated organizations will, among other things: conduct intake with survivors to determine program eligibility, coordinate with licensed vendors regarding the installation of dwelling safety measures, and conduct education and outreach about the program, as outlined in the Act.

As you know, this Honorable Board must comply with the requirements of the State Environmental Quality Review Act ("SEQRA"). The proposed Act does not meet the definition of an action under New York State Environmental Quality Review Act and its implementing regulations, 6 NYCRR Part 617. Please refer to the memorandum from the Department of Planning dated January 8, 2024, which is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Legislators.

Your Committee, after careful consideration, recommends the adoption of this Act.

Dated: June 10, 2024
White Plains, New York

Margaret A. Cio	
	Vedat Jashari
Vedat Jashari	David J. Tubiolo
Benjamin Boyfaint	J. V.
David J. Tubiolo	Elli Green Wolf
J. V.	James J. Sullivan Johnson
and am	

COMMITTEES ON

Legislation

Labor & Human Rights

Dated: June 10, 2024

White Plains, New York

The following members attended the meeting remotely and approved this item out of Committee with an affirmative vote. Their electronic signature was authorized and is below.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin J. J. J." with a stylized flourish at the end.

COMMITTEE ON

Legislation

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

SUBJECT: Dwelling Safety Measures NO FISCAL IMPACT PROJECTED

OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT

To Be Completed by Submitting Department and Reviewed by Budget

SECTION A - FUND

GENERAL FUND AIRPORT FUND SPECIAL DISTRICTS FUND

SECTION B - EXPENSES AND REVENUES

Total Current Year Expense \$ -

Total Current Year Revenue \$ -

Source of Funds (check one): Current Appropriations Transfer of Existing Appropriations
 Additional Appropriations Other (explain)

Identify Accounts: 101 11 0900 4380

Potential Related Operating Budget Expenses: Annual Amount \$0.00

Describe: An Act establishing a program to assist with dwelling safety measures for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence.

Potential Related Operating Budget Revenues: Annual Amount \$0.00

Describe: _____

Anticipated Savings to County and/or Impact on Department Operations:

Current Year: _____

Next Four Years: \$200,000 Expense

\$50,000 per year to be contracted to Designated Organizations to administer the program.

Prepared by: Stephanie Basilan

Title: Program Admin, CT Mangement

Department: Office for Women

Date: June 10, 2024

Reviewed By: 

Budget Director

Date: 6/10/2024

An Act establishing a program to assist with dwelling safety measures for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence.

BE IT ENACTED by the County Board of the County of Westchester as follows:

Section 1. This Act institutes a program to assist survivors of domestic and gender-based violence with dwelling safety measures, such as new locks and security camera installation.

Section 2. Definitions.

For the purposes of this Act, the following terms have the following meanings:

1. **Community-based Organization.** A nonprofit organization that provides services to Survivors regardless of language spoken, gender identity, sexual orientation, criminal history, income, or immigration status.
2. **Designated Organization.** A Community-based Organization designated by the Director, pursuant to Section 3 of this Act, to administer the Program.
3. **Director.** The Director of the Westchester County Office for Women, or the Director's designee.
4. **Dwelling.** Any building or structure, or portion thereof, which is occupied in whole or in part as the home, residence, or sleeping place of one or more individuals, and which is occupied by an Eligible Household.
5. **Dwelling Safety Measures.** The provision of Lock Changes and/or Home Security Camera Installation.
6. **Eligible Household.** A household that meets the following criteria:
 - a. Includes a Survivor;

- b. Such Survivor resides in the County; and
 - c. Any other criteria deemed appropriate by the Director to further the purposes of the Program, except that, to the extent allowed under applicable law, such criteria shall not relate to the consumer credit history, criminal history, or immigration status of such Survivor or of any other member of such Survivor's household.
7. **Home Security Camera Installation.** One or more home security cameras provided to a Program Participant, including the installation of the camera(s) on the exterior of, or in, the Dwelling of a Program Participant.
 8. **Locks.** Any lock on an exterior or interior door that provides access to the Dwelling.
 9. **Lock Changes.** The provision of new Locks and keys for a Dwelling.
 10. **Office.** The Westchester County Office for Women.
 11. **Program.** The program required by Section 3 of this Act.
 12. **Program Participant.** Any Survivor who is a member of an Eligible Household that a Designated Organization selects, following its intake process, to participate in the Program.
 13. **Survivor.** A person who has experienced or reported domestic violence or gender-based violence. For the purposes of this definition, status as a Survivor is established by self-identification, documentation from an agency or Community-based Organization, or an order of a court of competent jurisdiction.

Section 3. Program Established.

1. The Office shall administer contracts with Designated Organizations to provide, where permitted by applicable law, Dwelling Safety Measures for the Dwelling of each Program Participant.
2. The Director shall:

- a. Develop and monitor policies, standards, and operational procedures for the Program.
 - b. Establish a list of qualified Community-based Organizations, from which the Director shall select one or more Designated Organizations, in accordance with County procurement procedures, to implement and administer the Program; and
 - c. Provide an application for such Program for potential Program Participants to be kept on record by each Designated Organization.
3. After contracting with the Office to implement and administer the Program, a Designated Organization shall make a reasonable effort to ensure compliance with each of the following:
- a. Conduct appropriate intake to determine whether Survivors will become Program Participants. Intake shall include consideration of prior use of the Program by a Survivor;
 - b. Any Lock Changes or Home Security Camera Installation made as part of the Program may only be performed by a vendor licensed as required by local, state, or federal law. Lock Changes must be performed in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws;
 - c. Prior to commencing Lock Changes under the Program, such Lock Changes shall not result in illegally locking out a lawful occupant of the Dwelling. Such reasonable efforts to ensure this may include one or all of the following:
 - i. If the Program Participant is a tenant of a rented Dwelling, the Program Participant shall provide the Designated Organization with a copy of the applicable lease, sublease, or rental agreement, identifying the Program Participant as a tenant.

- ii. If the Program Participant is the owner of a Dwelling, the Program Participant shall provide the Designated Organization with a copy of the deed to the property, identifying the Program Participant as the owner or grantee.
 - iii. If a perpetrator of domestic or gender-based violence resides in the Eligible Household and/or the perpetrator's name is on the lease or deed for the Dwelling, the Survivor shall provide the Designated Organization with a copy of a court order then in effect, which vacates the perpetrator from the Dwelling and identifies the Survivor as the protected party.
 - d. Coordinate with any such Program Participant, prioritizing the safety and privacy of such Program Participant, to notify the owner, leaseholder, or landlord of a Dwelling of the Lock Changes and/or Home Security Camera Installation, as appropriate and/or required by the terms of the Program Participant's lease, sublease, or rental agreement. This may include entering into a license agreement to gain access to the Dwelling, including any premises in which such Dwelling is located, for the purposes described in this Act. Such license agreement may include insurance, liability, and/or indemnity provisions.
4. Lock Changes and/or Home Security Camera Installation shall be provided to Program Participants as soon as possible after a determination of the Program Participants' eligibility and selection for such Program and, to the extent practicable, within seven (7) days after such determination.

Section 4. Education and Outreach.

Each Designated Organization shall conduct outreach and education, including written materials, to educate the public about the Program. The Designated Organization shall distribute such

materials to shelters (including domestic violence shelters), appropriate facilities operated by County departments, law enforcement agencies, appropriate courts within the County, Community-based Organizations, and other organizations as deemed appropriate. Such materials shall also be made available on the Designated Organization's website. Such materials shall include:

1. A detailed explanation of the Program, including an indication that there is no cost to Survivors or Program Participants associated with the Program, and that immigration status does not need to be revealed;
2. Information on how the Program will be implemented and instructions for how to apply or make an appointment; and
3. Any other information as determined by the Director.

Section 5. Effective Date.

This Act shall take effect 180 days after enactment.