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DC Expands Support for Crime Victims in the District

Washington, DC (October 18, 2022) – Today the full DC Council approved Expanding Supports for Crime Victims Amendment Act of 2021 in its second and final vote. The bill, introduced by Councilmember Charles Allen, paves the way for increased equity in victims' access to critical advocacy services, enforcement of their rights, and eligibility for compensation in the aftermath of a crime.

"This is a groundbreaking approach to ensuring that our laws are infusing equity into how survivors of crime experience support in the aftermath of violence," said Bridgette Stumpf, NVRDC executive director. "This bill strengthens access to crime victims compensation and expands the legal protections for communication between victims and advocates."

Prior to the passing of this bill, NVRDC partnered with Medstar Washington Hospital Center (MWHC) to establish enhanced access to crime victims' rights legal support for patients that were accessing MWHC's community violence intervention program. "As Medical Director of our hospital-based community violence intervention program, I am excited to see DC is moving towards improving access to justice for survivors of violence and establishing innovative, community driven best practices to break the cycle of violence," said Dr. Erin Hall, co-medical Director for the Surgical Intensive Care Unit at MedStar Washington Hospital Center and the medical director of the MedStar Washington Hospital Center-Community Violence Intervention Program.

In passing this bill, the District takes a demonstrable step towards investing in community-based responses to harm while at the same time ensuring responsible accountability over the criminal legal and enforcement processes. Legally protected classes of acute crisis professionals for all crime victims are critical to ensure victims are provided access to confidential, privileged, and knowledgeable support. Access to such professionals protects against further victimization or retaliatory violence; empowers victims to explore survivor-defined justice and healing; and lays the foundation for a future where community-based healing in response to crime can become a tangible reality. NVRDC applauds the bill's effort to guarantee equal protections and support in the aftermath of violence.

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About NVRDC: Network for Victim Recovery of DC empowers victims of any crime to achieve survivor-defined justice through a collaborative continuum of advocacy, case management, and legal services. To learn more about NVRDC, please visit nvrdc.org.