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EMERGENCY LEGISLATION IN CA

At an August 4 news conference at the Family Violence Prevention Fund's San Francisco office, State Senator Leland Yee (D-San Francisco/San Mateo) announced that he will introduce legislation to help save the state Department of Health's Domestic Violence Program and keep emergency shelters open statewide. In collaboration with state domestic violence leaders, Senator Yee announced legislation that will allocate \$16.3 million from the victims' compensation fund, which has a balance of \$136.2 million, to the Domestic Violence Program. Senator Yee plans to introduce it, and a bill to allow domestic violence programs greater flexibility in how they allocate funds, later this month.

The emergency was created last month when Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger eliminated the Department of Public Health's Domestic Violence Program, which was scheduled to provide \$16.3 million (a 20 percent cut from last year) to 94 domestic violence shelters and centers across California. These funds help local agencies provide emergency shelter, transitional housing and legal advocacy, as well as assistance with restraining orders, counseling and other vital support services.

The second bill Senator Yee will introduce will allow shelter programs funded by the California Emergency Management Agency temporary flexibility in deciding which services to offer. California law places many mandates on shelters and, without this legislation, shelters could risk losing other government funds if they cannot provide all of the programs and services required by law.

"It is absolutely vital that we keep domestic violence shelters open," Senator Yee said. "The Governor's veto increases health care, law enforcement and other costs to the state but, more critically, it puts victims of domestic violence and their children in grave danger."

"Many (shelters) will not be able to be supported without that funding," Assemblyman Anthony Adams (R-Claremont) told the *Sacramento Bee*. "That \$16 million supported almost 105,000 people in the state – people who will have nowhere to go other than the emergency room. That's not a good answer."

"Those of us who work every day on behalf of victims of domestic violence already know that shelters are often the only thing standing between victims and grave physical danger," said Family Violence Prevention Fund President Esta Soler. "California's communities cannot sustain this great loss."

"We are appalled to see the Governor eliminate funding to vital programs that save lives," said Tara Shabazz, Executive Director of the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence. "The Governor is balancing the budget on the backs of our state's most vulnerable citizens. Funding must be restored by any means necessary."

"This is a bipartisan issue that Californians care about," added Beverly Upton, Executive Director of the San Francisco Domestic Violence Consortium and Partners Ending Domestic

Abuse. “We must bring these dollars back to the domestic violence shelters and those who work in the trenches every day to keep California safe.”

The press conference also featured: Maria Bee, Victim Services Division, San Francisco District Attorney’s office; Kathy Black, La Casa de las Madres; Rodney Clark, Safe Alternatives to Violent Environments; Emberly Cross, Cooperative Restraining Order Clinic; Huong Le, Asian Women’s Shelter; Melissa Lukin, Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse of San Mateo County; and Carol Sacco, San Francisco Department on the Status of Women.