

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 896 Session of 2025

INTRODUCED BY BARTOLOTTA, STEFANO, KANE, MILLER AND HAYWOOD,
JUNE 30, 2025

REFERRED TO JUDICIARY, JUNE 30, 2025

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of November 24, 1998 (P.L.882, No.111),
2 entitled "An act providing for victims' rights; imposing
3 penalties; establishing remedies; establishing the Office of
4 Victim Advocate, the Bureau of Victims' Services, the
5 Victims' Services Advisory Committee, the State Offender
6 Supervision Fund and other funds; and making repeals," in
7 compensation, further providing for determination of claims
8 and for awards.

9 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
10 hereby enacts as follows:

11 Section 1. Section 704(b) (1) of the act of November 24, 1998
12 (P.L.882, No.111), known as the Crime Victims Act, is amended to
13 read:

14 Section 704. Determination of claims.

15 * * *

16 (b) Review.--

17 (1) The Office of Victims' Services shall review the
18 claim and all supporting documents and investigate the
19 validity of the claim. The investigation [shall] may include
20 an examination of police, court and official records and
21 reports provided by the claimant concerning the crime and may

1 include an examination of medical and hospital reports
2 relating to the injury upon which the claim is based.
3 Providing the Office of Victims' Services with a valid form
4 of supporting documentation described under section 707(a.1)
5 shall be considered sufficient to verify that the crime
6 occurred. Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to
7 limit the Office of Victims' Services' ability to contact the
8 agency, organization, court or individual from which a
9 supporting document is said to originate to confirm the
10 document's authenticity. The Office of Victims' Services may
11 not request or review counseling notes of mental health
12 service providers. The Office of Victims' Services shall
13 request an assessment from the mental health service provider
14 as to the extent the service provided is needed as a direct
15 result of the crime.

16 * * *

17 Section 2. Section 707(a), (a.1), (a.2) and (b)(1)(iii) of
18 the act are amended and the section is amended by adding a
19 subsection to read:

20 Section 707. Awards.

21 (a) Requirements.--No award shall be made unless it is
22 determined by a preponderance of the evidence that:

23 (1) A crime was committed.

24 (2) The person injured or killed was a direct victim or
25 intervenor.

26 (3) The crime was promptly reported to the proper
27 authorities or the Office of Victims' Services receives a
28 form of documentation described under subsection (a.1).

29 (4) The direct victim, intervenor or claimant has fully
30 cooperated with [all law enforcement agencies and] the Office

1 of Victims' Services, unless the Office of Victims' Services
2 finds the noncompliance to have been justified consistent
3 with the Office of Victims' Services regulations. The Office
4 of Victims' Services shall [ensure that the regulations
5 relating to cooperation with all law enforcement agencies of
6 a direct victim, intervenor or claimant comply with] provide
7 information encouraging victim cooperation with law
8 enforcement agencies in compliance with all applicable
9 Federal laws and regulations relating to state promotion of
10 victim cooperation with law enforcement.

11 (a.1) [Protection from abuse] Supporting documentation.--A
12 claimant who satisfies the eligibility requirements of
13 subsection (a)(1), (2) and (4) may satisfy the eligibility
14 requirement under subsection (a)(3) [for reporting a crime to
15 the proper authorities by commencing] by doing any of the
16 following:

17 (1) Commencing an action brought in accordance with 23
18 Pa.C.S. Ch. 61 (relating to protection from abuse) and as
19 provided for in the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure. In
20 no case may an award be made if the record shows that the
21 petition was[:]

22 (1) Withdrawn] withdrawn, unless the Office of Victims'
23 Services finds the withdrawal to have been justified,
24 consistent with regulations of the Office of Victims'
25 Services.

26 (2) (Reserved).

27 (2.1) Commencing an action brought in accordance with 42
28 Pa.C.S. Ch. 62A (relating to protection of victims of sexual
29 violence or intimidation) and as provided under the
30 Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure. An award may not be

1 made if the record shows that the petition was withdrawn,
2 except if the Office of Victims' Services finds the
3 withdrawal to have been justified, consistent with
4 regulations of the Office of Victims' Services.

5 (3) Providing the Office of Victims' Services with
6 medical records documenting injuries to the direct victim or
7 intervenor, consistent with the allegations of the crime.

8 (4) Obtaining a sexual assault forensic examination.

9 (5) Providing the Office of Victims' Services with a
10 signed statement from a mental health care provider or other
11 licensed health care provider certifying that the victim
12 suffered from physical or mental injury as a result of the
13 crime. In the event the certifying mental health care
14 provider or licensed health care provider provides direct
15 services to the victim, compensation for the services shall
16 be limited to Medicare-approved rates.

17 (6) Any other form of documentation that the Office of
18 Victims' Services considers sufficient pursuant to
19 regulations to verify that the crime occurred.

20 [(a.2) Sexual violence and intimidation orders.--A claimant
21 who satisfies the eligibility requirements of subsection (a)(1),
22 (2) and (4) may satisfy the eligibility requirement under
23 subsection (a)(3) for reporting a crime to the proper
24 authorities by commencing an action brought in accordance with
25 42 Pa.C.S. Ch. 62A (relating to protection of victims of sexual
26 violence or intimidation) and as provided for in the
27 Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure. An award may not be made
28 if the record shows that the petition was withdrawn, except if
29 the Office of Victims' Services finds the withdrawal to have
30 been justified, consistent with regulations of the Office of

1 Victims' Services.]

2 (b) Amount.--

3 (1) Any award made under this chapter shall be
4 contingent upon funds being available and be in an amount not
5 exceeding out-of-pocket loss, together with loss of past,
6 present or future earnings or support resulting from such
7 injury. In no case shall the total amount of an award exceed
8 \$35,000 except for payment of the following:

9 * * *

10 (iii) reasonable and necessary costs of cleaning the
11 crime scene of a private residence or privately owned
12 motor vehicle, the amount of which shall not exceed
13 [\$500] \$1,500.

14 * * *

15 (i) Debt collection activities prohibited.--

16 (1) When a claimant files a claim for compensation under
17 this chapter, any of the following that has been given notice
18 of a pending claim relating to the debt or expense, as
19 provided under paragraph (3) or (4), shall refrain from all
20 debt collection activities relating to the claim until the
21 Office of Victims' Services has made an award on the claim
22 and issued payment or 45 days after the date of notice from
23 the Office of Victims' Services of a final decision to deny
24 the claim:

25 (i) A hospital or licensed health care provider that
26 has provided medical care in relation to the crime upon
27 which the claim is based.

28 (ii) A person or entity that has provided funeral or
29 death-related services in relation to the death of a
30 victim.

1 (iii) A person or entity that has provided crime
2 scene cleanup services.

3 (iv) Another vendor of a service or expense that may
4 be eligible for an award under this chapter.

5 (2) As soon as practicable, the Office of Victims'
6 Services shall issue to a claimant a written notice of the
7 claim and inform the claimant that the claimant may provide a
8 copy of the written notice to vendors or service providers to
9 have debt collection activities cease while the claim is
10 pending.

11 (3) An applicant may provide a copy of the written
12 notice issued under paragraph (2) to a vendor or service
13 provider waiting for payment of a debt related to the claim.
14 Providing the notice to a vendor or service provider
15 authorizes the vendor, service provider or a billing agent of
16 the vendor or service provider to confirm with the Office of
17 Victims' Services the claimant's claim status and date of
18 resolution as it relates to vendor or service provider's
19 specific debt.

20 (4) A vendor or service provider that assists an
21 applicant in completing or submitting a claim for
22 compensation, or a vendor or service provider that submits a
23 bill to the Office of Victims' Services, has constructive
24 notice of the filing of the claim and must not engage in debt
25 collection activities against the applicant for debt related
26 to the claim, in accordance with paragraph (1).

27 (5) The statute of limitations for collection of debt
28 shall be tolled during the period in which the applicable
29 vendor or service provider is required to refrain from debt
30 collection activities under this subsection.

1 (6) As used in this subsection, the term "debt
2 collection activities":

3 (i) Shall include:

4 (A) repeatedly calling or writing to a claimant
5 or other person eligible for benefits associated with
6 a claim;

7 (B) threatening to refer or actually referring
8 the unpaid health care matter, funeral expense, other
9 death-related expense or crime scene cleanup expense
10 to a debt collection agency or an attorney for
11 collection;

12 (C) filing a legal action or pursuing any legal
13 process or legal proceeding; or

14 (D) contacting a credit ratings agency or
15 distributing information that could affect the
16 claimant's credit rating as a result of nonpayment
17 for the service provided.

18 (ii) Shall not include:

19 (A) billing insurance or other government
20 programs;

21 (B) routine inquiries about coverage by private
22 insurance or government programs; or

23 (C) routine billing that indicates that the
24 amount is not due pending resolution of the claim for
25 compensation.

26 Section 3. This act shall take effect in 60 days.