Proclamation

Whereas, New York has continuously demonstrated a strong commitment to fighting all forms of crime and has seen historic reductions in crime over the past two decades, culminating in the lowest crime rates in recorded state history; and

Whereas, the state's commitment to crime victims ensures they have a voice in the criminal justice system and are treated with the dignity, respect and compassion they deserve; the New York State Office of Victim Services has been an integral part of this commitment, providing a critical safety net for the needs of crime victims and their families for more than a half-century; and

Whereas, in 2018, the Office of Victim Services provided over $21.9 million in compensation which helped nearly 10,000 innocent victims of crime and their families pay for medical bills, counseling, moving expenses and essential personal property; and reimbursed medical providers for the cost of forensic sexual assault exams to assist investigations and ensure privacy for victims; and

Whereas, also in 2018, the Office of Victim Services provided approximately $60.1 million in funding to 228 victim assistance programs that provide critical services to victims of crime in all 62 counties throughout the state — all at no cost to taxpayers; the Office's funding is supported almost entirely from fines, mandatory surcharges, and crime victim assistance fees that certain perpetrators pay after conviction in either New York State or federal court; and

Whereas, the Office of Victim Services recognizes that victims often face psychological, social, and legal barriers — such as isolation, distrust of authorities, language limitations, or cultural boundaries — that prevent them from seeking the assistance they need to recover; to better address the needs of vulnerable populations, the Office sponsored various trainings in 2018 to help victim advocates from across the state better serve victims of crime by enhancing their operations and connecting with traditionally underserved members of society; and

Whereas, in 2018, New York State further widened the safety net it provides to victims of crime suffering from the mental and emotional trauma that they frequently experience; the Office expanded benefits for victims of hate crimes and certain other crimes, including those often associated with domestic violence, despite lack of physical injury, allowing these individuals to apply for reimbursement of certain costs and expenses; and

Whereas, by embracing this year's national theme of "Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future," New York State reaffirms its dedication by providing vital services and programs that assist victims in the aftermath of a crime, and ensuring justice for even more individuals affected by crime — including traditionally underserved members of society — such as the elderly, members of the LGBTQ community, immigrants, and male victims of sexual abuse; and

Whereas, all New Yorkers join in the observance of National Crime Victims' Rights Week and its goals to focus greater attention on the importance of victims' rights, support courageous individuals who are willing to speak about their experiences to educate and empower others, and remember those who have been forever changed by crime;

Now, Therefore, I, Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York, do hereby proclaim April 7-13, 2019 as

CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

in the Empire State.

Given under my hand and the Privy Seal of the State at the Capitol in the City of Albany this fourth day of April in the year two thousand nineteen.

Governor

Secretary to the Governor
Melissa DeRosa