

Trauma recovery centers can help heal Michigan, need legislators to fund

Sen. Sylvia Santana and Sen. Erika Geiss, guest writers

Over the past several months, Michiganders have faced unprecedented traumatization. The devastation from COVID-19 disproportionately taking lives and impacting residents across our state, along with the anguish from the turmoil during this moment in history, has been traumatic.



Community violence, a persisting issue in Michigan, has been exacerbated by the strains placed on communities by the pandemic. The lack of critical assistance to those areas hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic (and historically under-resourced) has also resulted in trauma.

All of this trauma is sadly too familiar to victims of crime, especially those in communities most impacted by violence but least helped to recover from it. That's why we have joined with our colleagues in the Legislature to advance a bipartisan solution that should be adopted in the state budget: establishing trauma recovery centers in Michigan.



One in four Michiganders have been the victim of a crime in the past 10 years, and many report experiencing trauma as a result. Yet, there is a large gap between victims' needs to recover and access to that critical support. According to a recently released national report, less than 1 in 3 crime victims receive help to recover.

Being unable to access crucial support services is not only detrimental to survivors of crime, but to entire communities. Victimization puts survivors at greater risk of mental health issues and other challenges that can lead to instability in employment, housing, and families. By failing to address trauma, the cycles of crime and harm are allowed to spread through communities. People are more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system, experience substance abuse challenges, and be revictimized.

It does not have to be this way. We have an opportunity to shape a better system that makes communities safer by addressing the trauma from violence, and trauma recovery centers are a critical solution.

We have worked with our Republican colleagues, Sens. Peter MacGregor and John Bizon, to include \$4 million per year from federal funding in the Legislature's proposed budget to develop four trauma recovery centers in Battle Creek, Detroit, Flint and Grand Rapids. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services must ensure that the money is dispersed as it was

intended. We can all agree that this is an investment in public safety that our state needs and deserves, one we can be proud of including in the final adopted budget.

Trauma recovery centers are designed to reach crime victims who typically fall through the cracks of traditional victim services, the case for many in communities of color, rural areas and throughout Michigan. These centers provide comprehensive services, including mental health and crisis intervention, and assistance navigating systems of medical treatment, law enforcement, victim compensation, employment, housing, among others. They are highly effective and also cost less than traditional fee-for-service care. Data from established centers show that those who participated in their services were 56 percent more likely to return to work. Sexual assault victims served by them were nearly 70 percent more likely to officially report the crime.

The need for these centers is even more acute amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The communities most harmed by violence are those also most severely impacted by this deadly virus. The impacts of both feed off one another as the economic, health and social consequences are compounded. Domestic violence victims, who have been placed at increased risk during the pandemic, face barriers to services as providers are strained by the new limitations imposed on us all.

These centers would provide a pathway for survivors to get the help they need at a time when they are most vulnerable.

As women of color, we know the disproportionate impact faced by those who look like us. Women across Michigan deserve support when they are harmed, and that is especially critical in communities of color that have long been underserved by the current system.

While we are in a period of particular vulnerability for so many victims of crime, especially women, the need for trauma recovery centers goes far

beyond this moment. As we strive to create a safer Michigan that prioritizes our most vulnerable, these centers are a smart solution to advance long term safety that yields significant improvements for communities. The choice is clear.

State Sens. Sylvia Santana and Erika Geiss represent parts of Wayne County in Southeast Michigan

<https://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/opinion/contributors/viewpoints/2020/11/11/investing-healing-trauma-investing-michigans-future/6234623002/>