

MOTION

PUBLIC SAFETY

In April 2018, the Trump administration quietly changed the definition of “domestic violence” on the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) website. The revised definition states that domestic violence “includes felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim, by a person with whom the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse or intimate partner, by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction receiving grant monies, or by any other person against an adult or youth victim who is protected from that person’s acts under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction.” This definition replaces the far more extensive one put into place by the Obama administration which included a broad definition of abusive behavior, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, economic abuse and sexual abuse.

The OVW is charged with enforcing the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and as part of its responsibilities, offers various grants to local jurisdictions to combat domestic abuse. The Police Department and City Attorney have been recipients of these grants for many years, and funds have been used to provide a number of services to victims, and not only for criminal prosecutions. It is important that the Council be informed of any impacts that OVW’s revised definition of domestic violence will have on grant-funded programs.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Police Department, with the assistance of the City Attorney, report on any impacts to federally-funded anti-domestic violence programs caused by the change to the definition of “domestic violence” to “felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence” by the Department of Justice’s Office on Violence Against Women.

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FEB 01 2019

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