



# National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

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March 8, 2021

The Honorable Jerry Nadler  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2132 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2426 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick  
U.S. House of Representatives  
271 Cannon HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Nadler, Jackson Lee and Fitzpatrick:

On behalf of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, which has worked since 1993 to strengthen and transform efforts to end domestic violence, I am writing to express our support for the Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 2021 and our gratitude for your leadership in ensuring that survivors are able to access lifesaving programs and services.

With each reauthorization of VAWA, Congress has made important steps forward to better address the needs of survivors and communities. Based on extensive conversations with and feedback from local programs and advocates about current strengths and disparities in VAWA, we – along with our partners in the domestic and sexual violence movements – recommended several key enhancements to the current statute. We are very pleased that your legislation includes the targeted improvements that programs across the country need to do their jobs and support survivors.

According to the Centers for Disease Control's [National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey](#) (NISVS), 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men are the victim of physical violence, contact sexual violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner and experience negative impacts such as injury, fear, concern for safety, or a need for services.<sup>i</sup> In just one day in 2019, 77,226 domestic violence victims and their children received services at a local program in their community, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, counseling, legal advocacy, and children's support groups. However, on that same day, 11,336 requests for services went unmet because programs lacked the resources to meet victims' needs.<sup>ii</sup> Of those unmet requests for services, 68% were for

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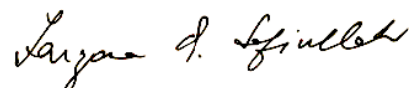
housing. Indeed, safe housing is among the most pressing concerns for survivors who have left or are planning to leave an abusive relationship. Thirty-eight (38) percent of all domestic violence victims become homeless at some point in their lives.<sup>iii</sup> And among mothers with children experiencing homelessness, more than 80 percent had previously experienced domestic violence.<sup>iv</sup> We are particularly grateful that your legislation would strengthen protections for survivors in public housing, including by ensuring that survivors can transfer units when necessary for safety reasons, as well as other housing protections that are critical for survivors seeking safety and stability.

We are also supportive of other key proposals in your legislation, including:

- Supporting Communities of Color;
- Investing in prevention;
- Ending impunity for non-Native perpetrators of sexual assault, child abuse co-occurring with domestic violence, stalking, sex trafficking, and assaults on tribal law enforcement officers on tribal lands;
- Improving enforcement of court orders that require adjudicated domestic abusers to relinquish their firearms;
- Improving access to housing for victims and survivors;
- Protecting victims of dating violence from firearm homicide;
- Helping survivors gain and maintain economic independence;
- Updating the federal definition of domestic violence for the purposes of VAWA grants only to acknowledge the full range of abuse victims suffer (does not impact the criminal definition of domestic violence);
- Maintaining existing protections for all survivors; and
- Improving the healthcare system's response to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

Again, thank you for championing the needs of victims and survivors and for supporting the work of domestic and sexual violence programs across the country. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your colleagues in Congress to ensure bipartisan support for VAWA 2021 and to pass legislation that will provide needed services and supports to survivors and their families and communities.

Sincerely,



Farzana Q. Safiullah  
Chief Executive Officer  
The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence  
Office: 800-537-2238

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<sup>i</sup> *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 State Report*. Atlanta, GA. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS-StateReportBook.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> National Network to End Domestic Violence (2018). *12<sup>th</sup> Annual Domestic Violence Counts Report*. Available at: <https://nnedv.org/mdocs-posts/2017-report/>.

<sup>iii</sup> Baker, C., Cook, S., & Norris, F. (2003). *Domestic Violence and Housing Problems: A Contextual Analysis of Women's Help-Seeking, Received Informal Support, and Formal System Response*. *Violence Against Women* 9(7), 754-783.

<sup>iv</sup> Aratani, Y. (2009). *Homeless Children and Youth, Causes and Consequences*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.

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