April 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

To Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The undersigned organizations which advocate on behalf of survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking, represent millions of survivors of gender-based violence and harassment, the professionals who serve these survivors, the faith organizations that support them, and the communities that care about them throughout the United States and territories.

We write to urge you to address the urgent and emerging needs of domestic violence and sexual assault survivors and the programs that serve them during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and resulting disruptions. It is imperative that the next stimulus package address survivors’ needs - directly and via the programs that serve them.

Requests for COVID-19 Phase Four Response Package

Overview:

● Department of Justice:
  ○ $100 million in emergency funding for the Sexual Assault Services Program (OVW) to assist rape crisis centers in transitioning to virtual services and meeting the emergency needs of survivors;
  ○ $225 million in emergency VAWA funding (OVW) to be distributed to the states and territories for victim services with funding streams for Tribes and culturally specific services;
  ○ $10 million for Outreach to Underserved Populations (OVW);
  ○ $40 million for the Transitional Housing Program (OVW);
  ○ Waive the match requirement and enact legislation to increase deposits for the Victims of Crime Act, Crime Victims Fund (OVC);

● Department of Health and Human Services:
  ○ $100 million for the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) and waive matching requirement;

● Department of Housing and Urban Development:
  ○ $100 million for HUD Continuum of Care Domestic Violence Bonus to provide specialized housing for survivors experiencing homelessness and waive matching requirement; and
$20 million in VAWA emergency transfer tenant protection voucher assistance for rental assistance for survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking eligible for assistance under 34 U.S.C. § 12491(e).

- Economic supports for survivors:
  - Provide paid leave that covers as many workers as possible and includes safe leave for survivors; and
  - Ensure that survivors who need to separate from employment because of the threat that accompanies social distancing have the option to quit their jobs and seek unemployment insurance even if paid leave, telework or work from home are available to them;

- Immigrant rights across agencies:
  - Ensure immigrants have access to health, safety, and stability, including access to COVID-19 testing and treatment, and restricting immigration enforcement.

The need:
As the nation is increasingly mandated or urged to stay home or social distance to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we are starkly reminded that “home” is an unsafe place for those experiencing domestic violence, sexual violence, and child abuse. This time of heightened economic, health, familial, and emotional stress also means that those who have experienced trauma in the past are finding it harder to cope. Housing, economic, legal, advocacy, and physical and mental healthcare supports are critical to protect survivors from further harm. Simultaneously, direct service providers are grappling with the unprecedented challenge of housing survivors and providing life-saving services while following distance and separation protocols. Marginalized survivors face additional threats and barriers to health and safety, e.g., heightened vulnerabilities due to chronic underlying conditions, geographic and language barriers to resources and healthcare, and food insecurity.

Survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking are disproportionately impacted by this crisis, and the federal government’s response must be swift and specific to meet the needs of all survivors, including survivors of color, Native survivors, immigrant survivors, LGBTQ survivors, survivors with disabilities, survivors who are older adults, and survivors from other underserved communities. The phase four supplemental appropriations bill must contain funding for community-based domestic violence and sexual assault organizations; must ensure everyone has access to domestic violence and sexual assault services and COVID-19-related programs and benefits; and must include provisions to meet the long-term victim-service needs created by the COVID-19 crisis.

Appropriations:
Existing funding streams must be increased and administrative burdens must be reduced to ensure that programs can meet survivors’ safety, medical, economic, housing and stabilization needs with a focus on marginalized and Native communities. We call on Congress to increase the following funding streams:
● **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP)** by at least $100 million to help rape crisis centers transition to virtual services and respond to the urgent needs of survivors;

● **Family Violence Prevention and Services Act** by at least an additional $100 million to provide shelter, and alternative housing, and services to survivors and their families, and specialized services for children and technical assistance to address the emerging needs of the field responding to COVID-19;

● **VAWA supplemental funding to the states and territories for victim services (distributed according to the STOP distribution formula at 34 U.S.C. 10446(b)(1) and (b)(5-6))** by at least $225 million.
  ○ Supplemental funding shall be distributed to victim service providers (as defined at 34 U.S.C. § 12291(a)(43)) in order to provide victim services (as defined at 34 U.S.C. §12291(a)(44)).
  ○ Funding should acknowledge the disparities faced in American Indian and Alaska Native communities and honor tribal sovereignty by providing equitable resources to American Indian and Alaska Native communities directly to address domestic violence.
    ■ 10% of the supplemental funding shall be distributed to Tribal governments to supplement existing Tribal programs; and
  ○ Funding should be allocated with the acknowledgement of the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on marginalized communities and the chronic underinvestment in these communities.
    ■ Of this funding, the greater of 20% or $25 million shall be distributed to eligible entities under 34 U.S.C. § 20124(c), with equitable distribution of funding between services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and including the provision of technical assistance to support service provision;

● **VAWA Outreach and Services to Underserved Populations** grants by $10 million;

● **VAWA transitional housing** by $40 million;

● **HUD Continuum of Care Domestic Violence Bonus** by $100 million to provide specialized housing for survivors experiencing homelessness; and

● $20 million in **VAWA emergency transfer tenant protection voucher assistance** for rental assistance for survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking eligible for assistance under 34 U.S.C. § 12491(e).

**Eliminating barriers to accessing supplemental funding:**

At a time when programs need emergency funding, it is critical that grant recipients have maximum flexibility. This can be provided in part by **temporarily reducing procedural bureaucratic burdens** such as by:

● Eliminating matching fund requirements for VOCA, HUD Continuum of Care Funding, and VAWA funding obligated during the COVID-19 crisis and for the duration of the resulting economic fallout;

● Reducing documentation requirements, time-limitations and any other burdens that slow down access to funds for rental assistance;

● Allowing all relevant funds to be used to provide temporary, individual accommodations, such as hotel or motel vouchers; and
Allowing the federal administering agencies to hire staff to help ensure efficient distribution of funds.

Victims of Crime Act
The increased need resulting from COVID-19 will extend long past the end of the pandemic response, and programs must be able to meet both the immediate and long term needs of survivors, Congress must increase deposits into the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) by requiring direct penalties and fines from federal deferred and non-prosecution agreements that are currently being deposited in the General Treasury to be deposited into the CVF.

Economic supports
Survivors of domestic and sexual violence have unique barriers to gaining and maintaining employment. Congress should address this by:
- Providing paid leave that covers as many workers as possible and includes safe leave for survivors;
- Ensuring that survivors, who need to separate from employment because of threats of violence that accompany social distancing, have the option to quit their jobs and seek unemployment insurance even if paid leave, telework or work from home are available to them; and
- Ensuring any distribution plan for cash assistance/Recovery Rebates to individuals accounts for survivors who are in undisclosed locations or have recently separated from an abusive partner.

Immigrant victims and survivors
Even before the pandemic, immigrant survivors were facing additional and unique barriers to accessing services that promote and maintain their health and safety. In order to improve access to health, safety, and stability for all victims, Congress must:
- Expand Medicaid eligibility to ensure access to testing and treatment for everyone, regardless of immigration status;
- Allow people who have filed taxes with Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers to access Recovery Rebates;
- Restrict immigration enforcement against survivors by:
  - Prohibiting immigration detention and the removal of those with pending humanitarian immigration applications;
  - Significantly reducing the overall population of people in Customs and Border Patrol custody;
  - Preventing Immigration and Customs Enforcement measures at all sensitive locations, including to ensure unimpeded access to law enforcement assistance and court services;
- Mandate that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other federal agencies create flexibility with respect to immigration procedural requirements to ensure that difficulties complying at this time do not mean permanent denials of protection;
- Require that DHS automatically extend or renew immigration statuses and work authorization for immigrants that have expired or will expire during the crisis; and
- Ensure that all federal agencies provide meaningful language access for limited English-Proficient survivors to COVID-19 related information and supports pursuant
to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, as well as providing additional funding to facilitate interagency coordination among agencies activated through the National Response Framework based on language access standards and provide additional resources to community-based organizations that have established relationships with hard-to-reach populations.

**Conclusion**
Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault are facing extreme danger at the same time that programs and systems will struggle to respond. We strongly urge you to address these dire needs by investing more resources to address the unique needs of survivors and securing needed policy changes as a matter of urgency.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Monica McLaughlin at the National Network to End Domestic Violence (mmclaughlin@nnedv.org), Rachel Graber at the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (rgraber@ncadv.org), and Terri Poore at the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (terri@endsexualviolence.org).

Sincerely,

**National**
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
American Association of University Women
Amnesty International USA
APA Advocacy
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence
ASISTA
Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities
Center for Gender and Refugee Studies
Center for Survivor Agency and Justice
Child Welfare League of America
Clearinghouse on Women’s Issues
Closing the Women’s Wealth Gap
Coalition on Human Needs
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women
Collaborative Solutions, Inc.
ContactLifeline, Inc. SAND
Daughters of Penelope
End Rape on Campus
FaithTrust Institute
Futures Without Violence
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
Institute on Violence, Abuse, and Trauma
Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Women International
Just Detention International
Justice for Migrant Women
Legal Momentum
LULAC
MANA, A National Latina Organization
NA’AMAT USA
NAACP
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance for Safe Housing
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
National Asians and Pacific Islanders Ending Sexual Violence
National Association of Social Workers
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Center for Victims of Crime
National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health
National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs
National Congress of American Indians
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
National Domestic Violence Hotline
National Employment Law Project
National Equality Action Team
National Health Law Program
National Housing Trust
National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center
National Latinx Psychological Association
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women and Families
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
National Women’s Law Center
Network Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Beginnings APFV (formerly The Association for Prevention of Family Violence)
North American MenEngage Network
OCA- Asian Pacific American Advocates
Oxfam America
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
RALLYANCE
Rural Coalition
Tahirih Justice Center
Ujima: The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community
Ultraviolet
Union for Reform Judaism
V-Day
Vital Voices Global Partnership
Women’s Caucus of the American Psychiatric Association
Women of Color Network
Women of Reform Judaism
Women’s Law Project
Woodhull Freedom Foundation
YWCA USA

Alabama
Alabama Coalition Against Rape
Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence
One Place FCJ
Penelope House

Alaska
Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center

Arizona
A New Leaf
Against Abuse, Inc.
Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
Arizona South Asians for Safe Families
Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona
Catholic Community Services Yuma
City of Phoenix Family Advocacy Center
Eve’s Place
Kaity’s Way
Mariposa Wings to Safety
Mt. Graham Safe House

Arkansas
Arkansas Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Margie’s Haven House
OCYFS- Ouachita Family Services
Serenity, Inc.

California
California Coalition Against Sexual Assault
California National Organization for Women
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
Equal Rights Advocates
Family Services of Tulare County
FreeFrom
Harrison Artem Consulting
Peace Over Violence
Prevention Institute
Institute on Violence, Abuse, and Trauma

**Colorado**
Advocate Safehouse Project
Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Everyday Being
Good Grief Counseling and Safe Dock
Project Safeguard
Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley
Violence Free Colorado

**Connecticut**
Activism Caucus of the Association for Women in Psychology
Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence
Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence
The Center for Family Justice

**Delaware**
Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Sexual Assault Network of Delaware

**District of Columbia**
DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
DC Rape Crisis Center
Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project
Friends Committee on National Legislation
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women’s Reproductive Justice Agenda
It’s On Us
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
The United Methodist Church- General Board of Church and Society

**Florida**
Florida Council Against Sexual Violence

**Georgia**
Anafiel House, Inc.
Columbus Alliance for Battered Women, Inc. d/b/a Hope Harbour
Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Peace Place, Inc.
SAFE Shelter
SAFE Shelter Center for Domestic Violence
Shepherd’s Rest Ministries

**Guam**
Guam Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence

**Hawaii**
Domestic Violence Action Center
Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence

**Idaho**
Bingham Crisis Center
Idaho Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence

**Illinois**
Guardian Family Services
Hidden Treasures Incorporated
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights
HOPE of Easte Central Illinois
Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence
McHenry County NOW
Mercer County Family Crisis Center
SAFE Coalition for Human Rights

**Indiana**
A Better Way Services, Inc.
Disciples Women
Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Jennings County Council on Domestic Violence, Inc.
Middle Way House
Violence Free Living, Inc.

**Iowa**
Crisis Intervention & Advocacy Center
Domestic Violence Intervention Program
Family Resources
Friends of the Family
Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Latinas Unidas por un Nuevo Amanecer (L.U.N.A.)
Monsoon Asians & Pacific Islanders in Solidarity
Rape Victim Advocacy Program
Riverview Center

**Kansas**
Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence

Kentucky
Kentucky Association Against Domestic Violence
Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Louisiana
Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Louisiana Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Metro Centers for Community Advocacy
Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response (STAR) Center
The Butterfly Society

Maine
Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence

Maryland
Bound for Better: Advocates for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Center for Abused Persons
Congregation of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces
Crisis Intervention Center
Dove Center
Family Crisis Resource Center, Inc.
Greater Washington Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse
HopeWorks of Howard County, Inc.
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault
SARC, Inc.
Southern MD Center for Family Advocacy
The Women’s Law Center of Maryland

Massachusetts
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center
Family and Community Resources, Inc.
Greater Boston Legal Services, Inc.
Harvard Legal Aid Bureau
Jane Doe Inc.
Jewish Family and Children’s Services of Greater Boston
MetroWest Legal Services
Pathways for Change, Inc.- Central MA Rape Crisis Center
The Network/La Red
Relief After Violence Enconter- Ionia/Montcalm, Inc.
The Avenue Family Network
The Women’s Center
Uniting Three Fires Against Violence
YWCA Kalamazoo
Michigan
Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence

Minnesota
Battered Women’s Justice Project
Global Rights for Women
Violence Free Minnesota, Minnesota Coalition Against Domestic Violence
OutFront Minnesota
Sojourners
Someplace Safe
Violence Prevention Center
Wilhelm Therapy & Consulting

Mississippi
Mississippi Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Missouri
Safe In Harm’s Way
The Angel Band Project
Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

Montana
Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

Nebraska
Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence

Nevada
Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence

New Hampshire
New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

New Jersey
National Organization for Women of New Jersey
New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence
Partners for Women and Justice

New Mexico
Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women
Community Against Violence
New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence
New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Inc.
Santa Fe NOW
New York
Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center
CAMBA
Chinese-American Planning Council
Crime Victims Treatment Center
Day One
Family Services
Fearless! Hudson Valley, Inc.
Her Justice
Joyful Heart Foundation
Nassau NOW
New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Rise- NY
Safe Harbors of the Finger Lakes
Safe Horizon
Sakhi for South Asian Women
Soaring Pathways
The Caribbean Voice
Vera House, Inc.
VIBS- Victims Information Bureau of Suffolk, Inc.
We All Rise

North Carolina
Equality North Carolina
Fayetteville National Organization for Women
North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence
North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault

North Dakota
CAWS North Dakota
Kedish House Domestic Violence Program

Northern Marianas Islands
Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

Ohio
Crime Victim Services
Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence
Ohio Domestic Violence Network
Project Women of Ohio
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

Oklahoma
Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Oregon
Domestic Violence Resource Center
Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force

Pennsylvania
AWARE, Inc.
Centre Safe
Crisis Center North
Domestic Abuse Project of Delaware County
Domestic Violence Service Center, Inc.
Domestic Violence Services of Lancaster County
Huntingdon House
Laurel House
Lutheran Settlement House
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape
Roads to Peace/Clinton County Women’s Center
SAFE (Stop Abuse For Everyone)
Schuykill Women in Crisis
The Abuse Network
Transformation Analysis
Transitions of PA
Victims Resource Center
Victims Intervention Program
Women Against Abuse
Women’s Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh
Women’s Resource Center
YWCA Carlisle
YWCA Northcentral PA
YWCA York

Puerto Rico
Coordinadora Paz para la Mujero, Puerto Rico Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

Rhode Island
Center for Southeast Asians
Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Women’s Fund of Rhode Island

South Carolina
Foothills Alliance
Hopeful Horizons
Laurens County SAFE Home Network
Palmetto Citizens Against Sexual Assault
Pickens County Advocacy Center
Safe Harbor
Sistercare
South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

South Dakota
National Organization for Women, South Dakota Chapter
South Dakota Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault

Tennessee
Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence

Texas
Foundation for Inspiring Victims of abuse
Hill Country Community Needs Council
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas
Katy Christian Ministries
Texas Association Against Sexual Assault
Texas Council on Family Violence

US Virgin Islands
Virgin Islands Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Council

Utah
Boardman Training & Consulting
New Hope Crisis Center of Box Elder County
Utah Domestic Violence Coalition

Virginia
Bethany House of Northern Virginia
Empowerhouse
Global Woman P.E.A.C.E Foundation
Peaceful Families Project
Project Horizon, Inc.
Survivors of the Lion’s Den
Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance

Washington
Legal Voice
The Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian, and Gay Survivors of Abuse
Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs
Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
**West Virginia**
Tug Valley Recovery Shelter
West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence

**Wisconsin**
Advocates of Ozaukee
AVAIL, Inc.
End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin
Family Advocates, Inc.
Haven, Inc.
Hope House of South Central Wisconsin
New Horizons Shelter and Outreach Centers
Rape Crisis Center, Inc.- Dane County, WI
Red Cliff Family Violence Prevention Program
Safe Harbor of Sheboygan County, Inc.
The Bridge to Hope
The Women’s Center
Violence Intervention Project
Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault

**Wyoming**
Advocacy & Resource Center
FOCUS, Inc
Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault