

April 20, 2020

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

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

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate
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
RALIANCE
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

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 East 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

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)
Schuylkill 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 Mujer, 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