

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 4, 2021

The Honorable Rebecca K. Slaughter  
Acting Chair  
Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Acting Chair Slaughter,

We write to express serious concerns regarding recent reports that data brokers are publicizing the location and contact information of victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking, which perpetrators can use to track their victims, and to request specific information about the steps the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is taking to help protect survivors.

One in four women and one in nine men experience intimate partner violence<sup>1</sup> and often are forced to relocate to a relative's house to find safety. Recent reports highlight that people-search sites, which collect personal data such as phone numbers, email addresses, and other public information, also often include the names and addresses of family members.<sup>2</sup> The availability of this data makes it difficult or impossible for victims to safely relocate with relatives.

As reports of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking have increased during the pandemic, the threat of the virus has made it even more difficult for victims to find safety and support.<sup>3</sup> While some states have addressed confidentiality programs that allow victims to use a post office box as their legal address, we have serious concerns that third party data brokers play a role in revealing the protected address and providing access to personal information that can lead to continued abuse.

While we appreciate your efforts to highlight the critical need for increased consumer privacy and how open data and hacking can further victimization, we believe additional measures to protect personal data should be taken to ensure the privacy of victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking and to make it easier for them to remove their information from data broker sites. We respectfully request that you respond to the following questions:

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<sup>1</sup> Truman, J.L. and Morgan, R.E. (2014, April). *Nonfatal Domestic Violence, 2003–2012*. The British Journal of Medicine. <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ndv0312.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Hvistendah, M. (2020, August 20). *I Tried to Get My Name off People-Search Sites. It Was Nearly Impossible*. Consumer Reports. <https://www.consumerreports.org/personal-information/i-tried-to-get-my-name-off-peoplesearch-sites-it-was-nearly--a0741114794>

<sup>3</sup> Bosman, J. (2020, May 15, Updated 2020, August 7). *Domestic Violence Calls Mount as Restrictions Linger: 'No One Can Leave'*. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/15/us/domestic-violence-coronavirus.html>

- Does the FTC need additional resources to better protect domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking victims from data broker sites? If so, please describe these resource needs in detail.
- How can we help the FTC coordinate with the Department of Justice, states and localities, and private stakeholders to prevent perpetrators of violence from gaining access to the personal information of victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking?
- What resources does the FTC offer victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking to educate them about data sharing sites and how to protect their personal information?
- Is the FTC planning to take additional measures to better protect victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking and help ensure they have the right to review and remove their information, and assist them should they become victim to a breach of information sharing? If so, please describe these measures.
- Is the FTC planning to help ensure data broker companies are not collecting, buying, or selling lists of vulnerable populations, including victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to working with you to address this critical issue.

Sincerely,



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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



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Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator