

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 5, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to urge you to include strong support and funding for programs at the Department of Justice that provide services for victims and survivors of gender-based violence as you work to develop and transmit the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2022.

As the original author of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), you know that the programs authorized by VAWA are essential to helping people who experience domestic violence and sexual assault. Since the passage of VAWA in 1994, rates of intimate partner violence have decreased by 60 percent.¹ The country has seen a decline in both the number of victims of intimate partner violence and the number of intimate partner homicides. Additionally, every state has now enacted laws making stalking a crime.² VAWA represents a turning point in our country's response to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

Nevertheless, we are very concerned that, as a result of the pandemic, cases of domestic violence and sexual assault have increased in communities across the country. Local law enforcement report more domestic violence-related calls and rape crisis centers are seeing increased need for services.³ The pandemic has also made it more difficult for service providers to respond to the increased need for crisis intervention, legal services, and transitional housing. A recent survey found that 89 percent of survivor-serving programs need emergency funding to respond to current requests from survivors for support and assistance.⁴ Like many of the consequences of

¹ Shannan Catalano, *Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2010*, U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics (Nov. 27, 2012), <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=4536>.

² Monica N. Modi, Sheallah Palmer & Alicia Armstrong, *The Role of Violence Against Women Act in Addressing Intimate Partner Violence: A Public Health Issue*, 23 *J. Women's Health* 253 (2014), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3952594/#B20>.

³ *Responding to COVID-19: Rape Crisis Centers & Survivor Needs*, National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (Apr. 6, 2020), <https://www.raliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NAESVCovid4RapeCrisisCenterSurveyFinal.pdf>; Tyler Kingkade, *Police see rise in domestic violence calls amid coronavirus lockdown*, NBC News. (Apr. 5, 2020). <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/police-see-rise-domestic-violence-calls-amid-coronavirus-lockdown-n1176151>.

⁴ *Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence are at Heightened Risk Now, and Will Remain So Long After the Current Crisis*, The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (Apr. 16, 2020), http://www.4vawa.org/ntf-action-alerts-and-news/2020/4/16/survivors-of-domestic-and-sexual-violence-are-at-heightened-risk-now-and-will-remain-so-long-after-the-current-crisis#_ftn1.


this pandemic, the continued shortage of resources disproportionately impacts Black and Latino communities, rural communities, and Alaskan Native and American Indian communities.

Although the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the relief package that passed with the Consolidated Appropriations Act last December included supplemental funding for programs authorized by the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, no additional funding has been provided for VAWA programs at the Department of Justice. While the absence of supplemental funding has been challenging for all Department of Justice grantees, survivors of sexual assault and those from communities of color are in particular need. The Department provides the primary source of sexual assault supportive services through the Sexual Assault Service Program and currently funds the only grant program for community based organizations that provide services primarily focused on culturally specific communities.

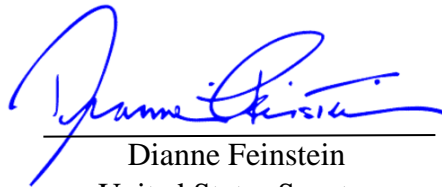
Therefore, we respectfully request that you make funding these programs a priority. In particular, we urge you to include strong funding for the Sexual Assault Service Program, STOP Formula Grant Program (with added flexibility to fund victim service providers), Grants to Enhance Culturally Specific Services, Grants for Outreach and Services to Underserved Populations, the Legal Assistance to Victims Program, and the Transitional Housing Program. We additionally request that the federal government fulfill its trust responsibility to Indian Tribes by providing equitable resources to American Indian and Alaska Native communities to address gender-based violence.

Thank you for your leadership on these critical issues and your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



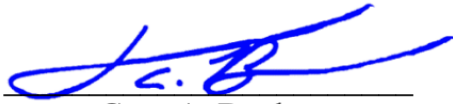
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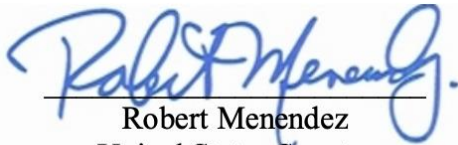
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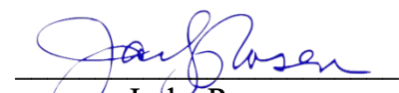

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