



April 1, 2019

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**Vote Yes on the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019 (H.R. 1585);
Oppose any Motion to Recommit or any Amendments that Weaken Protections**

Dear Representative:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we write to urge you to **support H.R. 1585, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019 and to vote against any amendments that would weaken protections for survivors of violence or any motion to recommit when the bill reaches the House floor.**

The reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is critical to protect the civil and human right of all people in the United States to be free from gender-based violence, including domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. These protections are especially important for LGBTQ people, people of color, and American Indian and Alaska Native women who continue to experience high rates of violence.

More than half of American Indian and Alaska Native women, for example, have experienced sexual violence (56.1 percent) in their lifetime or have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner (55.5 percent); almost half have experienced stalking (48.8 percent).¹ Further, an estimated 21 percent of Black women and 14 percent of Hispanic women have experienced rape during their lifetimes, and another 38 percent of Black women, 37 percent of Hispanic women, and 32 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander women have experienced sexual violence other than rape.² Black women also experience higher rates of intimate partner violence (45 percent) than white or Hispanic women.³

LGBTQ people also disproportionately suffer from violence. Although lesbians and gay men experience higher levels of sexual and intimate partner violence compared to non-LGBTQ

¹ National Congress of American Indians. "Research Policy Update: Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women." http://www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/research-data/prc-publications/VAWA_Data_Brief_FINAL_2_1_2018.pdf.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence, Stalking, and Intimate Partner Violence Victimization." https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6308a1.htm?s_cid=ss6308a1_e.

³ Office for Victims of Crime. "Intimate Partner Violence." https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrvw2018/info_flyers/fact_sheets/2018NCVRW_IPV_508_QC.pdf



people, bisexual women and transgender individuals experience shockingly high rates of violence. Sixty-one percent of bisexual women experience rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner, compared to 35 percent of heterosexual women;⁴ and more than half (54 percent) of transgender people experience some form of intimate partner violence while 47 percent experience sexual assault, with transgender people of color facing the greatest risk of violence.⁵

Gender-based violence can have devastating effects on survivors, their families, and their communities. Domestic violence and sexual assault can have short- and long-term health effects; disrupt survivors' access to education; undermine survivors' ability to work and make ends meet; and jeopardize the ability of survivors to maintain stable housing. While every survivor needs support, survivors from marginalized or otherwise underserved communities are less likely to be able to access the services they need to heal and rebuild their lives.

Since VAWA was first passed in 1994, rates of violence, on average, have decreased, but more can and should be done to prevent gender-based violence, hold perpetrators accountable, protect all survivors, and ensure access to appropriate services and supports.

H.R. 1585, a bipartisan bill developed after extensive outreach to direct service providers, survivors, and other experts in the field, makes modest yet vital updates to the existing VAWA based on an increased understanding of gender-based violence and the needs of survivors of all backgrounds, from all communities.

In addition to maintaining vital protections and programs for all survivors, H.R. 1585 would:

- Enhance legal tools to hold perpetrators accountable;
- Authorize increased investment in prevention programs, including for students and underserved communities;
- Strengthen the healthcare system's ability to meet the safety, medical, and mental health needs of individuals affected by domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking;
- Improve the ability of survivors in public, subsidized, and assisted housing to maintain or access safe housing;
- Recognize and provide tools to mitigate the detrimental impact of gender-based violence on the economic security of survivors;
- Work to reduce rates of homicide by lawfully protecting survivors from abusers with firearms; and
- Increase access to justice and safety for American Indian and Alaska Native women.

⁴ National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation."

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_sofindings.pdf

⁵ National Center for Transgender Equality. "The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey."

<https://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/USTS-Full-Report-FINAL.PDF>

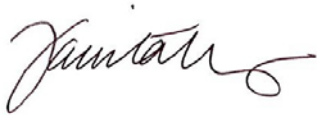
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Everyone deserves to live safe and healthy lives, free from domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Despite some progress, however, rates of violence are still far too high. We cannot roll back protections for any survivor or simply maintain the status quo. We urge you to support H.R. 1585 and oppose any motion to recommit or any weakening amendments. **The Leadership Conference will score votes associated with this bill in our voting record for the 116th Congress.**

If you have any questions, please contact Gaylynn Burroughs, Senior Policy Counsel, at (202) 548-7163 or burroughs@civilrights.org.

Sincerely,



Vanita Gupta
President & CEO



Kristine Lucius
Executive Vice President