

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 5, 2021

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
United States Senate Committee on
Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
United States Senate Committee on
Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

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

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

Dear Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

We write to request that future supplemental appropriations legislation provide support for survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse and for the organizations that serve them. Unfortunately, efforts in Congress to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic have not provided adequate resources for programs and grants that serve survivors during this difficult time. We urge you to prioritize funding for programs and grants authorized under the Violence Against Women Act and the Victims of Child Abuse Act in any supplemental legislation that the Senate and House may consider.

Social distancing, stay-at-home orders, travel restrictions, business closures and other measures designed to limit mobility and stop the spread of COVID-19 increase the risk of family violence and sexual assault. These measures coupled with increased unemployment, psychological stress and the negative social consequences associated with COVID-19 leave survivors extremely vulnerable during the pandemic. The National Domestic Violence Hotline has reported that callers are increasingly indicating that their abusers

are using COVID-19 to further isolate them from their family and friends.¹ Even if survivors are able to contact friends or family for help, they may be hesitant to seek refuge out of fear that they could expose those close to them to COVID-19. Additionally, a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the risk for child abuse and neglect during pandemics increases while reports of abuse to child protection agencies tend to decrease because children lose contact with mandated reporters.²

The threat of family violence and sexual assault is also increasing while many organizations that serve survivors are struggling to raise funding for their work. These organizations are experiencing a surge in demand for their services even as the pandemic has made traditional fundraising models difficult or impossible. Now is the time for the federal government to provide the support that rape crisis centers, shelters and other organizations need to keep survivors safe. Despite these challenges, survivor advocates have worked diligently to provide the best possible services to individuals in crisis. Survivors must be able to access services during a pandemic that has left many of them increasingly vulnerable to abusers.

Resources provided through the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) and Victims of Child Abuse Act (VOCAA) grant program provide critical support for survivors. These programs have effectively allocated funding to groups that work with survivors for decades and are appropriately tailored to address the needs of communities and populations that face unique challenges during the pandemic. On February 5, the Senate unanimously passed an amendment to the concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget that expressed support for funding these programs. The bipartisan recognition in Congress that OVW and VOCAA programs should be adequately resourced demonstrates the need to address this funding in future supplemental legislation.

We urge you to provide at least \$375 million for OVW and \$50 million for VOCAA in a future supplemental appropriations package. This funding will help address the challenges that survivors have encountered during the pandemic. Specifically, we request that you include the following amounts for these programs:

OVW

- STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grants: \$100 million
- Sexual Assault Services Formula Grant Program (SASP): \$100 million
- Transitional Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking: \$40 million
- Rural Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence and Stalking Assistance Program: \$20 million
- Justice for Families Grant Program: \$15 million
- Tribal Governments and Coalitions: \$50 million
- Sexual Assault Services Culturally Specific Program: \$25 million
- Grants for Outreach and Services to Underserved Populations: \$25 million

¹ Melissa Godin, *As Cities Around the World Go on Lockdown, Victims of Domestic Violence Look for a Way Out*, TIME, <https://time.com/5803887/coronavirus-domestic-violence-victims/>.

² Elizabeth Swedo et al., *Trends in U.S. Emergency Department Visits Related to Suspected or Confirmed Child Abuse and Neglect Among Children and Adolescents Aged <18 Years Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic –United States, January 2019-September 2020*. MMWR Morb. Mortal Wkly Rep. 2020.

VOCAA

- VOCAA Grants: \$50 million

We thank you for your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you to ensure that survivors are able to access the services they need.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jeanne Shaheen
JEANNE SHAHEEN
United States Senator

/s/ Debbie Wasserman Schultz
DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ
Member of Congress

/s/ Richard J. Durbin
RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein
DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar
AMY KLOBUCHAR
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden
RON WYDEN
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown
SHERROD BROWN
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith
TINA SMITH
United States Senator

/s/ Sheldon Whitehouse
SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senator

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand
KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senator

/s/ Jacky Rosen
JACKY ROSEN
United States Senator

/s/ Robert Menendez
ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator

/s/ Margaret Wood Hassan
MARGARET WOOD HASSAN
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator

/s/ Raphael Warnock
RAPHAEL WARNOCK
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher A. Coons
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS
United States Senator

/s/ Catherine Cortez Masto
CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO
United States Senator

/s/ Mark R. Warner
MARK R. WARNER
United States Senator

/s/ Alex Padilla
ALEX PADILLA
United States Senator

Sheila Jackson Lee
SHEILA JACKSON LEE
United States Senator

/s/ Tom Emmer
TOM EMMER
Member of Congress

/s/ Gwen Moore
GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress

/s/ Grace F. Napolitano
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO
Member of Congress

/s/ Barbara Lee
BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

/s/ James P. McGovern
JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress

/s/ Andre Carson
ANDRE CARSON
Member of Congress

/s/ Bobby L. Rush
BOBBY L. RUSH
Member of Congress

/s/ Michael T. McCaul
MICHAEL MCCAUL
Member of Congress

/s/ Chris Pappas
CHRIS PAPPAS
Member of Congress

/s/ Katie Porter
KATIE PORTER
Member of Congress

/s/ Dina Titus
DINA TITUS
Member of Congress

/s/ Eleanor Holmes Norton
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress

/s/ Sharice L. Davids
SHARICE L. DAVIDS
Member of Congress

/s/ Darren Soto
DARREN SOTO
Member of Congress

/s/ Earl Blumenauer
EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress

/s/ Nanette Diaz Barragan
NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGAN
Member of Congress

/s/ Alcee L. Hastings
ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress

/s/ Doris Matsui
DORIS MATSUI
Member of Congress

/s/ Peter A. DeFazio
PETER A. DEFAZIO
Member of Congress

/s/ Grace Meng
GRACE MENG
Member of Congress

/s/ Peter Welch
PETER WELCH
Member of Congress

/s/ Marc Veasey
MARC VEASEY
Member of Congress

/s/ Alan Lowenthal
ALAN LOWENTHAL
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/s/ Judy Chu
JUDY CHU
Member of Congress

/s/ Albio Sires
ALBIO SIRES
Member of Congress

/s/ Steven Horsford
STEVEN HORSFORD
Member of Congress

/s/ Ann McLane Kuster
ANN MCLANE KUSTER
Member of Congress

/s/ Stephen F. Lynch
STEPHEN F. LYNCH
Member of Congress

/s/ Lisa Blunt Rochester
LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER
Member of Congress

/s/ Anna G. Eshoo
ANNA G. ESHOO
Member of Congress

/s/ Salud Carbajal
SALUD CARBAJAL
Member of Congress

/s/ Karen Bass
KAREN BASS
Member of Congress

/s/ Dean Phillips
DEAN PHILLIPS
Member of Congress

/s/ Mark DeSaulnier
MARK DESAULNIER
Member of Congress

/s/ Jim Cooper
JIM COOPER
Member of Congress

/s/ Brendan F. Boyle
BRENDAN F. BOYLE
Member of Congress

/s/ Nydia M. Velazquez
NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ
Member of Congress

/s/ Jamie Raskin
JAMIE RASKIN
Member of Congress

/s/ Anthony G. Brown
ANTHONY G. BROWN
Member of Congress

/s/ Brian Fitzpatrick
BRIAN FITZPATRICK
Member of Congress

/s/ Diana DeGette
DIANA DEGETTE
Member of Congress

/s/ Jan Schakowsky
JAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress

/s/ Ed Case
ED CASE
Member of Congress

/s/ Theodore E. Deutch
THEODORE E. DEUTCH
Member of Congress

/s/ Jahana Hayes
JAHANA HAYES
Member of Congress

/s/ Al Lawson
AL LAWSON
Member of Congress

/s/ Cindy Axne
CINDY AXNE
Member of Congress

/s/ Tony Cardenas
TONY CARDENAS
Member of Congress

/s/ David E. Price
DAVID E. PRICE
Member of Congress

/s/ Kathy Castor
KATHY CASTOR
Member of Congress

/s/ William R. Keating
WILLIAM R. KEATING
Member of Congress

/s/ Linda T. Sanchez
LINDA T. SANCHEZ
Member of Congress

/s/ Yvette D. Clarke
YVETTE D. CLARKE
Member of Congress

/s/ Bonnie Watson Coleman
BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN
Member of Congress

/s/ Adriano Espaillat
ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
Member of Congress

/s/ Mike Thompson
MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress

/s/ Terri Sewell
TERRI SEWELL
Member of Congress

/s/ Seth Moulton
SETH MOULTON
Member of Congress

/s/ Tom O'Halleran
TOM O'HALLERAN
Member of Congress

/s/ Danny K. Davis
DANNY K. DAVIS
Member of Congress

/s/ Julia Brownley
JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress

/s/ Lucille Roybal-Allard
LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
Member of Congress

/s/ David N. Cicilline
DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress

/s/ Emanuel Cleaver, II
EMANUEL CLEAVER, II
Member of Congress

/s/ Mondaire Jones
MONDAIRE JONES
Member of Congress

/s/ Jason Crow
JASON CROW
Member of Congress

/s/ Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN
Member of Congress

/s/ Ron Kind
RON KIND
Member of Congress

/s/ Josh Gottheimer
JOSH GOTTHEIMER
Member of Congress

/s/ John Katko
JOHN KATKO
Member of Congress

/s/ Lois Frankel
LOIS FRANKEL
Member of Congress

/s/ Jackie Speier
JACKIE SPEIER
Member of Congress

/s/ Bill Foster
BILL FOSTER
Member of Congress

/s/ Colin Allred
COLIN ALLRED
Member of Congress

/s/ Mary Gay Scanlon
MARY GAY SCANLON
Member of Congress

/s/ Brad Sherman
BRAD SHERMAN
Member of Congress

/s/ Elissa Slotkin
ELISSA SLOTKIN
Member of Congress

/s/ Raul Grijalva
RAUL GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

/s/ Jennifer Wexton
JENNIFER WEXTON
Member of Congress

/s/ Brenda Lawrence
BRENDA LAWRENCE
Member of Congress

/s/ Stacey E. Plaskett
STACEY PLASKETT
Member of Congress

/s/ Lauren Underwood
LAUREN UNDERWOOD
Member of Congress