

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
& Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education &
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

Thank you for your commitment to funding programs serving victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. As the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittee considers its Fiscal Year 2018 priorities, we respectfully urge funding for the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, The National Domestic Violence Hotline, the Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) program, Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancements and Leadership Through Alliances (DELTA) program and The Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHSBG).

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) program supports life-saving services including emergency shelters, crisis hotlines, counseling and programs for underserved communities throughout the United States and territories. A formula grant administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, FVPSA is the only federal funding source dedicated to domestic violence shelters and programs. There are approximately 1,500 FVPSA-funded community-based domestic violence programs for victims and their children. These programs use FVPSA funding to keep their lights on and doors open. Victims in every community must have a place to which they can flee when they are escaping life-threatening violence. FVPSA is the cornerstone of our nation's efforts to address domestic violence. FVPSA also supports a new children's services program. This program allows communities to receive targeted training and funding to meet the needs of children to domestic violence.

FVPSA also funds the National Domestic Violence Hotline which is a nationwide service that provides 24-hour, toll-free and confidential services – crisis support and referrals to local service providers for victims of domestic violence, survivors, family members and friends, and even abusers. The Hotline, through calls, texts and chats, as well as via loveisrespect.org, its youth oriented helpline, answered over 320,000 contacts in 2017. Unfortunately, nearly 100,000 calls, chats and texts were not answered, however, due to a lack of resources in this same time period.

While FVPSA-funded programs serve over a million victims each year, a critical gap in services still persists. The National Network to End Domestic Violence reports that, on any given day in 2016, nearly 12,000 requests for services went unmet due to lack of funding and resources. Of those unmet requests, 66 percent were for safe housing. Also in 2016, domestic violence

programs laid off 1,200 staff positions. Most of those positions were direct service staff, including counselors, advocates, and children's advocates. Given reduced funding and staff, local programs had to reduce or completely eliminate countless services, including emergency shelter, legal advocacy, and counseling. For those individuals who are not able to find safety, the consequences can be extremely dire, including continued exposure to life-threatening violence or homelessness.

In addition to direct services, the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill also funds critical prevention efforts. The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence 2016 survey of rape crisis centers found that almost 40 percent of programs had waiting lists of a month or longer for prevention programs. The Rape Prevention and Education Program, through the budget of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, provides formula funding to every state and territory to raise awareness of the problem of sexual assault, support efforts to prevent first-time perpetration and victimization, and bring together diverse partners to develop, implement and evaluate statewide sexual assault prevention plans. The RPE program engages boys and men as partners, supports interdisciplinary research collaborations, fosters cross-cultural approaches to prevention and promotes healthy relationships.

To support domestic violence prevention efforts, the Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancements and Leadership Through Alliances program at CDC is the only dedicated federal funding source for the primary prevention of domestic violence. Through the use of evidence-supported initiatives, including social change and public health strategies, DELTA states have piloted and evaluated a range of programs designed to promote safety and respect across communities.

Lastly, the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant administered by the CDC allows states, territories and tribes to address their own unique public health challenges with innovative and community-driven methods.

Your tremendous leadership in providing resources to victims of domestic and sexual violence has been invaluable. While we understand the fiscal constraints you are under, we respectfully urge that you continue your commitment to this issue by ensuring that these vital life-saving programs are fully funded.

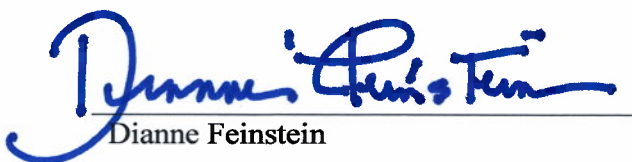
Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.



John Cornyn



Dianne Feinstein



Sherrod Brown



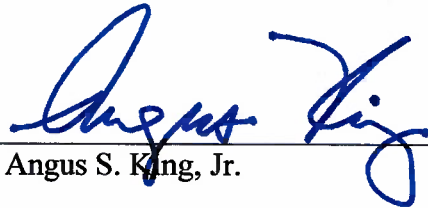
Sheldon Whitehouse



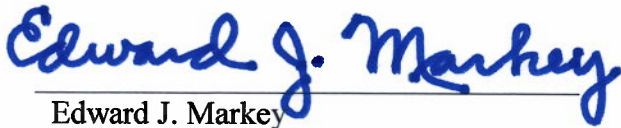
Catherine Cortez Masto



Michael F. Bennet



Angus S. King, Jr.



Edward J. Markey



Mazie Hirono



Dean Heller



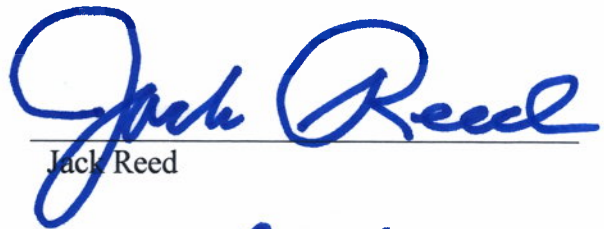
Amy Klobuchar



Tina Smith



Kirsten Gillibrand



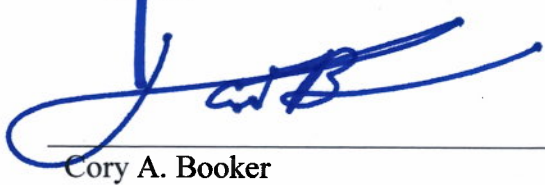
Jack Reed



Mike Crapo



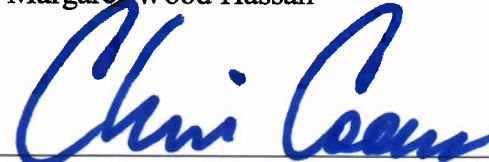
Elizabeth Warren



Cory A. Booker



Margaret Wood Hassan



Christopher A. Coons



Richard Blumenthal



Martin Heinrich



Joe Donnelly



Tammy Baldwin


Heidi Heitkamp


Bernard Sanders


Jon Tester