

**Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
Hearing on “Campus Sexual Assault: the Roles and Responsibilities of Law Enforcement”
December 9, 2014**

I thank Senator Whitehouse for chairing today’s hearing on the issue of campus sexual assault and the important role of law enforcement in protecting victims of violence. I appreciate the dedication of Senator Casey, who has been working to address this problem for many years through the Campus SaVE Act, which I was proud to include in the Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013. I also thank Senators Gillibrand and McCaskill for their work and for being here today.

As a father, I know many parents await the day their children leave for college with a mixture of dread and excitement. We are sad to see them leave, but we also understand this milestone is important and we want them to go out into the world to learn and grow. What parents should never have to fear is that their child will become a victim of sexual violence. A devastating number of students across the country have experienced rape or sexual assault, and together we must all do more to protect them. That is why I made sure that as we reauthorized and modernized the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) last year, we significantly increased the emphasis on addressing the needs of sexual assault survivors and included changes to better protect college students – including requirements to bolster students’ access to law enforcement resources.

A comprehensive approach is essential to successfully prevent and respond to sexual assault on college campuses. Even one victim is too many. But if violence does occur, we must make sure that colleges and law enforcement authorities work together to safely and effectively respond to victims’ needs. Several new provisions of the Leahy-Crapo VAWA reauthorization do just that.

The law we passed last year requires colleges to inform sexual assault victims of their options for reporting to law enforcement, and to assist them in making those reports if they choose to do so. It requires colleges to inform students that they may obtain legal orders of protection, and to stress the importance of preserving evidence of an assault. This provision arms student victims with crucial information that helps them make informed choices, and can facilitate law enforcement’s ability to hold the perpetrators responsible. Studies have shown that it is often a small number of men who are responsible for multiple assaults, so identifying and removing every offender from the campus community is critical to preventing future attacks. The U.S. Department of Education has recently issued final regulations implementing the portions of the Leahy-Crapo VAWA reauthorization related to campus sexual assault, and these will go into effect next summer.

As a former prosecutor, I know that law enforcement authorities play a critical role in protecting victims of sexual violence, and this should be no less true of student victims. Students’ access to law enforcement resources should not stop at the university gates. Victims need to know that law enforcement will understand and be responsive to their needs. Sexual assault is still chronically underreported, so making this process easier is critical to protecting everyone. The Leahy-Crapo VAWA reauthorization provides important steps to improve communication and

cooperation between college officials and law enforcement, and I am eager to learn from the witnesses here today who will be speaking to best practices for building trust among colleges, law enforcement, and student victims.

Protecting all victims of sexual and gender-based violence – including student victims – is an issue I have long been dedicated to. I have been encouraged by the recent national attention to this issue, and I know that it will strengthen our efforts moving forward. I thank Senator Whitehouse for convening this hearing and look forward to hearing from Senator McCaskill and Senator Gillibrand, as well as the other witnesses here today.

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