

Testimony of  
**M.L. Carr**

President, WARM2Kids  
Spokesperson, Family Violence Prevention Fund  
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President & CEO, WARM2Kids  
Before the Senate Judiciary Committee  
Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act  
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Good morning, my name is M.L. Carr. I would like to thank Chairman Specter and Senator Biden for holding this hearing and for allowing me to address this critically important issue. I greatly appreciate your efforts, combined with the efforts of Senator Hatch, to introduce the Violence Against Women Act of 2005. I commend you all for your longstanding commitment to ending violence against women.

Some of you may recognize me from my days with the champion Boston Celtics, but today I speak to you as the President & CEO of a company called WARM2Kids. WARM2Kids is an online educational tool based on youth development and mentoring programs. Our focus on prevention and active discussion is what brings me here.

Today, I also speak to you on behalf of the Family Violence Prevention Fund. As a board member, I have learned so much about the ever-present issue of violence against women. WARM2Kids worked with the Family Violence Prevention Fund and the National High School Athletic Coaches Association to create the Coaching Boys into Men Playbook - a book that details the activism called for in the Coaching Boys into Men public service campaign, developed in partnership with the Advertising Council and the Waitt Family Foundation.

My focal points today are several new provisions in the Violence Against Women Act of 2005 (VAWA 2005), especially those focusing on prevention and the ways in which adults, particularly men, can serve as role models to other men and young boys. There are two main ideas that seem prominent to me in the new provisions and they are prevention - which I believe means opening active dialogue about an issue before it becomes a problem - and adults, especially men, as role models.

The name of my company, WARM2Kids is an acronym for We're All Role Models to Kids. I truly believe this and that is also why I am here today. Some of us have a greater opportunity to shape the lives of young people. As a professional basketball player and coach, I saw firsthand the opportunity that sports figures and coaches have to influence youth and I saw what can happen when young people don't have positive role models. VAWA 2005 aims to open the necessary dialogue and extends the opportunity to shape our children's future to every concerned adult.

Basketball is all about numbers. If you don't put impressive numbers on the board, you don't become champions. Here are some numbers I want to give you: Up to 10 million children witness domestic violence annually - with tragic results. They are much more likely to become both victims and perpetrators of violence. They also experience notably increased rates of depression, suicide, alcohol and drug use as well as higher rates of incarceration. Two-thirds of all sexual assaults happen against children under the age of 18. The highest rates of domestic violence exist among young people between the ages of 16 and 24. These are not good numbers to have up on your board. We need to find champions, like all of the people behind VAWA, to work against these statistics.

Our young people are witnessing violence, experiencing violence and in many cases growing up to perpetrate the same violent patterns found in their families and communities. We can no longer be satisfied with locking people up after the violence and saying, "at least they didn't get away with it." If the violent act has been committed, then they have already gotten away with it as far as the victim is concerned. We must end violence before it starts.

The new VAWA helps us do that. It provides program funding for children who have grown up witnessing violence, support for families at risk of violence, and for the first time, it targets resources toward men and boys to help change the behavior and attitudes of other young men.

This is my life's work. The mission of my company, WARM2Kids, is to inform, instruct and inspire our youth to make positive life decisions, but today you are my focus. We can inform the world that violence can be prevented. The Family Violence Prevention Fund is here because VAWA provides a means to instruct all of us in the development and support of innovative programs that make the connection between adults and children. Together, we can inspire our youth and our nation to stop the violence.

Lives will be changed when we get behind this effort. Let me give you some more numbers: In November 2001, 29 percent of men were talking to their sons about violence against women. That number has increased to 41 percent today. The progress shows that the efforts backed by VAWA are working, but no one who is speaking to you today will rest until that is a championship number...one hundred percent.

We need VAWA to target specific programming to young people and give the adults in their lives - parents, teachers, coaches, and mentors - the tools to teach alternatives to violence. Teachers and principals are telling us that they don't know what to do when they see a violent dating relationship. Parents are telling us they want to talk to their kids but don't know how.

That isn't good enough. We can not ignore this trend. I am going to leave you with a few final numbers: 1994 - the original legislation was introduced and you got behind VAWA then. 2000 - adding services for people with disabilities, immigrants, rural and elderly women - you got behind VAWA again. 2005 - this year is your chance to be a champion. I urge you to get behind the Violence Against Women Act again. Thank you.