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February 28, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write today to urge you to join us in supporting the programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) during the current year's budget process.

Many of us have worked for decades to raise public awareness about sexual and domestic violence, improve services and resources for survivors, and improve the criminal justice system's response to crimes of domestic and sexual violence. Since its enactment in 1994, VAWA has helped States and communities throughout the country make significant progress in meeting these goals, but there is still much work to be done; for example, the Centers for Disease Control estimates that 22.3 percent of women and 14 percent of men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetimes.

Congress and Presidents William J. Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama supported the reauthorization of VAWA on three occasions, evidencing a national, bipartisan commitment to supporting victims of sexual and domestic violence in their recovery. Congress also has appropriated significant resources to support the grant programs authorized under this landmark statute over the last two decades. We encourage this Administration to again partner with Congress to champion critical VAWA programs aimed at preventing abuse, improving the law enforcement response to violence against women and children, and supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Funding for these programs is critical to meeting the needs of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. The victims of these crimes can include children and teenagers, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and Native women, among others. State, tribal, and local governments, law enforcement agencies, nonprofit organizations, as well as colleges and universities rely on VAWA funding to facilitate these victims' recovery from the often life-shattering effects of domestic and sexual violence and prevent further acts of violence.

Now, more than ever, it is imperative that we support victims and survivors by investing in VAWA to ensure that service providers and law enforcement personnel are equipped with the necessary tools to protect victims and to bring perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence to justice. Community assistance programs across the country reportedly are experiencing severe budget shortfalls, forcing domestic violence shelters to close or reduce services. Rape crisis centers and domestic violence programs in multiple states report a shortage of funds and staff to assist victims in need of services, particularly in the areas of transitional housing, emergency shelters and legal representation. According to a 2015 survey by the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, over one-third of rape crisis centers have a waiting list for basic services.

Finally, we urge you to support these key VAWA programs not only because they save lives but also because they are smart investments. VAWA programs have long-term positive impacts for victims of abuse and children who witness violence against family members. They also help stop the generational cycle of violence. Assistance funded through VAWA ensures emergency shelter, legal advocacy, and counseling for victims in the aftermath of abuse. Grants provide training and educational sessions for parents, teachers, law enforcement, and other professionals to prevent, identify, and respond to domestic and sexual violence.

Mr. President, we hope that you will join in our efforts to secure continued, adequate funding levels for these proven cost-effective, life-saving programs. To this end, we encourage you to make VAWA funding a priority in your proposed budget for fiscal year 2018.

Sincerely,

Chuck Grassley

Tom Harkin

Susan M. Collins

Shelley Moore Capito

Patrick Leahy

Jeanne Shaheen

Dianne Feinstein

Bob Casey, Jr.