

**Written Testimony for the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Gwen S. Moore, Representative of Wisconsin's 4th District
Regarding the Violence Against Women Act (Office on Violence Against Women) and
Victims of Crime Act (Office for Victims of Crime)
U.S. Department of Justice
April 17, 2018**

Chairman Culberson, Ranking Member Serrano, and distinguished members of the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on the importance of investing in Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) programs and the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). I appreciate the Subcommittee's ongoing support for these lifesaving programs. On behalf of Wisconsin's 4th congressional district, I am pleased to have the opportunity to testify before you to urge your continued support of robust federal investment in the successful, cost-effective VAWA (**\$571 million**) and release of **the average of the last three-years deposits** from the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) administered by the U.S. Department of Justice in the FY 2019 Budget.

The crimes of domestic and sexual violence are pervasive, insidious and life-threatening. Domestic violence affects more than 12 million women and men every year.ⁱ Additionally, nearly 15.5 million children are exposed to domestic violence every year.ⁱⁱ In Wisconsin, more than 1.8 million individuals have been raped or sexually assaulted.ⁱⁱⁱ The 2017 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that by the time females hit 12th grade, nearly 13% have been raped, over 19% have experienced any form of sexual violence, and 10% have experienced physical dating violence. More broadly, over 10% of students report having been forced into sexual activity. Victims of sexual assault are more likely to struggle professionally and academically while also suffering from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and suicide contemplation.

We are experiencing a watershed moment in our country as survivors of gender-based violence are coming forward after living in the shadows for years, even decades. The #MeToo movement, high profile cases, and the national focus on domestic and sexual violence has increased the need for comprehensive community responses and increased investment in resources to meet the needs of survivors. Our message to survivors must be clear: when you come forward for help and support, it will always be available. Our nation has made such phenomenal progress in understanding and addressing violence against women because Congress committed to make an ongoing, annual investment. Victims of these degrading and life-threatening crimes rely on critical services funded through VAWA such as shelter, rape crisis services, legal assistance, counseling, and more. Communities across the country depend upon federal prevention funding to protect our young people. Federal funding of VAWA underpins our nation's improvements to the community-based response to domestic and sexual violence.

Before the passage of VAWA, domestic violence was primarily seen as a “family matter,” sexual assault was in the shadows, and perpetrators were rarely arrested or prosecuted. VAWA has improved our nation’s response to these horrendous crimes with unprecedented coordination between police officers, victim service providers, prosecutors, judges, and the criminal and civil justice systems. Professionals in all capacities are collaborating to reduce violence and meet the needs of survivors. VAWA fosters innovation and promotes best practices across the nation. Additionally, VAWA funds enable states to maximize their resources to have a huge impact on these efforts.

VAWA’s work is complemented by VOCA, which funds direct services to victims of all types of crimes, including domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. The infusion of VOCA funding is leading to the creation and growth of innovative programs. Together, VAWA and VOCA have fueled our undeniable national progress towards addressing violence against women. VAWA saved an estimated \$12.6 billion in net-averted costs in its first 6 years alone.^{iv} Between VAWA’s implementation in 1994 and 2011, serious victimization by an intimate partner declined by 72% for women and 64% for men.^v A study has also demonstrated that an increase in the number of legal services available directly correlates to a decrease in intimate partner homicide.^{vi} Another study found that VAWA funds, particularly the ones supporting law enforcement, were associated with a reduction in rape and aggravated assault.^{vii}

Funding cuts would erode our nation’s progress on this critical issue. NNEDV’s *Domestic Violence Counts* (the Census), a 24-hour national snapshot of domestic violence services, revealed that in just one day, 72,245 victims of domestic violence received services; while 11,441 requests for services went unmet due to lack of funding and resources. 65% of these requests were for housing. According to a survey by the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, half of the nation's rape crisis centers have a waiting list for counseling services and almost 40% of programs had a waiting list of a month or more for prevention programming. A study found that when sexual assault victims have the support of an advocate in the aftermath of an assault, they receive more helpful information, referrals and services, and experience less secondary trauma or revictimization by medical and legal systems. They also fare better in the short and long term and are more likely to file a police report than those without such support.^{viii}

For those individuals who are not able to find safety, the consequences can be dire, including homelessness, continued exposure to life-threatening violence, or death. The terrifying conclusion of domestic violence is often murder, and every day in the U.S. an average of 3 women are killed by a current or former intimate partner.^{ix} In my home state, preliminary estimates of the most recent domestic violence homicide data shows that there were at least 54 lives were lost due to domestic violence. These are all deaths that will echo in those families, communities, cities, and the state. Thankfully, with the support of VAWA funding, my home district of Milwaukee is working to upend the tragic trajectory of needless death by

implementing a domestic violence lethality assessment project, but not all victims get this life saving assessment.

In addition to the terrible cost to individual victims and families, these crimes cost taxpayers and communities. According to the Centers for Disease Control, based on 1999 figures, the cost of intimate partner violence exceeds \$5.8 billion each year, \$4.1 billion of which is for direct health care services.^x Translating this into 2016 dollars, the annual cost to the nation is over \$9 billion per year. In addition, domestic violence costs U.S. employers an estimated \$3 to \$13 billion annually.^{xi} Without funding, law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges would not have the training and tools they need to ensure victim safety and to hold perpetrators accountable. Over 20 years of progress, learning and investment is threatened if we don't continue to invest in these essential programs.

We know that when a coordinated response is developed and immediate, essential services are available, victims can escape from life-threatening violence and begin to rebuild their lives. To address unmet needs and build upon their successes, VAWA programs and the VOCA fund release should reflect the needs of victims. The progress and promise of these bills can only be fulfilled if the programs receive continued significant investment. I urge you to support full funding for all VAWA programs as you work on the FY 19 CJS bill. Additional VOCA funds are critically needed to respond to the crisis caused by the dangerous lack of available services for victims of domestic and sexual violence. Additionally, I urge you to continue to provide federal funding stream from VOCA for tribes.

These programs work together to prevent and end domestic and sexual violence. We need to maintain our investment to build upon our successes and bring our progress to scale. Our federal resources create vital, cost-effective programs that help break the cycle, reduce related social ills, and will save our nation money now and in the future.

ⁱ National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Nation Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence survey, available at https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf

ⁱⁱ McDonald, R., et al. (2006). "Estimating the Number of American Children Living in Partner-Violence Families." *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(1), 137-142.

ⁱⁱⁱ These are prevalence estimates using randomized, anonymous telephone surveys. Respondents did not necessarily report the crime to law enforcement. National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Summary Report. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2011. http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf

^{iv} Kathryn Andersen Clark et al., A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, 8 *Violence Against Women* 417 (2002).

^v *FY 2017: Congressional Justification*. (2016). United States Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

<https://www.justice.gov/jmd/file/821736/download>; see also Catalano, S. (2013). Intimate partner violence: Attributes of victimization, 1992–2011 (NCJ 243300). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, available at <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ipvav9311.pdf>.

^{vi} Reckdenwald, A., & Parker, K.K. (2010). Understanding gender-specific intimate partner homicide: A theoretical and domestic service-oriented approach. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38, 951-958.

^{vii} Rachel Lilley, A Nationwide Assessment of Effects on Rape and Assault, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1077801208329146?journalCode=wawa>

^{viii} (Campbell, R. (2006). Rape survivors' experiences with the legal and medical system: Do rape victim advocates make a difference? *Violence Against Women*, 12, 30-45.

^{ix} Bureau of Justice Statistics (2013). Intimate Partner Violence: Attributes of Victimization, 1993-2011 (Special Report NCJ243300)

^x National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States*. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2003.

^{xi} Bureau of National Affairs Special Rep. No. 32, Violence and Stress: The Work/Family Connection 2 (1990); Joan Zorza, *Women Battering: High Costs and the State of the Law*, Clearinghouse Rev., Vol. 28, No. 4, 383, 385.