

January 31, 2013

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the YWCA USA, one of the nation's oldest and largest women's organizations in the United States, we are writing to you to present our top three national legislative priorities for the 113th Congress that we would like to accomplish with your leadership and support. We are pleased to share with you that our national office and local associations will be advocating for the swift and immediate passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), national immigration reform, and a fair and balanced approach to deficit reduction that helps women and families.

Founded over 150 years ago, the YWCA currently serves more than two million participants and employs 66,000 staff and volunteers in over 1,300 locations. In small towns and major cities, YWCAs offer women job training, housing, anti-violence programs and more. Our clients are women of all ages and backgrounds, including the elderly, survivors of domestic and sexual violence, military veterans and low-income and homeless women and their families.

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization

YWCA is deeply committed to legislation that is comprehensive in its reach to improve the lives of women and families. Therefore, the YWCA strongly supports the immediate passage of a bipartisan Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA) (S.47), similar to (S.1925) which passed the Senate in the 112th Congress.

For nearly 18 years, VAWA has provided a national, streamlined response to address domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. Nearly 2,600 women have been murdered as a result of domestic violence and sexual assault since VAWA expired. The YWCA urgently calls upon Congress to move towards swift passage of S.47, a bill that is trauma-informed, victim and community-centered and evidence-based. The YWCA supports all women and victims of abuse regardless of sexual orientation, immigration status or race, and does not stand for isolating subsets of the community that face unique barriers to accessing services. As a leading provider of services for victims of domestic violence, the YWCA is opposed to any provisions that force victims to negotiate their safety when seeking assistance from abusive situations.

National Immigration Reform

According to the 2010 Census, the population of the United States is becoming increasingly diverse, with over half of all children under the age of one classified as non-white or "minority." For over 150 years, YWCAs across the country have served the needs of their communities, providing vital intervention and prevention services for immigrant women, victims of domestic violence, children, and young women.

Last years' Presidential election demonstrated that immigration was overwhelmingly a mobilizing issue for Latino, Asian American and new American communities, bringing out voters in droves to voice their concern about our broken immigration system. Similarly, YWCAs across the country are deeply committed to advocating for a common sense immigration process that keeps families together here in the U.S., provides adequate protections for immigration victims of sexual

for every woman

violence and trafficking and that creates a roadmap for citizenship for 11 million new Americans who aspire to be citizens.

Deficit Reduction that Protects Women and Children

YWCA's across the country have witnessed firsthand the impact that the struggling economy has had on the well-being of the women and families. Job loss, stagnant wages, rising income, and wealth inequality have taken a terrible toll on single moms, communities of color, the disabled, and other vulnerable populations. Our local associations nationwide have been asked to do more to help those in need during a time of decreased donations and less government funding. The Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) are three sources of domestic discretionary funding that enable YWCA's to provide vital services to women and families nationwide including childcare, job training, transitional housing and domestic violence and sexual assault services.

As you know, domestic discretionary funding has been subjected to numerous cuts over the years including the Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 Budget, the debt ceiling agreement when FY 2012 funding was capped, and, most recently, the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-250), which instituted statutory caps on 2012-2021 spending. As we begin 2013, domestic discretionary funding is already subjected to caps through 2021, and to possible sequestration later this year.

The continued cuts, coupled with those already enacted into law, are proof that discretionary programs and the YWCA clients who rely on them have already shouldered the brunt of deficit reduction. We therefore ask Congress to protect discretionary spending including CCDBG, CDBG, and VAWA as Congress works on the FY 2013 and FY 2014 appropriations, and determines how to best address the sequester and advance long-term debt reduction. It is also our hope that Congress will continue to ensure that Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and SNAP/food stamps are not subject to harmful cuts such as changes to benefit levels or eligibility, which could further harm YWCA clients and others. In summary, we urge you to develop a fair and balanced approach to addressing our nation's debt and deficit that places military spending and revenue on the table, and protect the most vulnerable in our nation and the vital social programs that serve them.

We look forward to working with you and your staff on these issues in the 113th Congress. If you would like more information about the YWCA USA, please visit our website at www.ywca.org. Please call or email Desiree Hoffman, Director of Advocacy and Policy at the YWCA USA at 202-835-2354 or email dhoffman@ywca.org if you would like to discuss our legislative agenda further or have questions.

Sincerely,



Dara Richardson-Heron, M.D.
Chief Executive Officer



Desiree Hoffman
Director of Advocacy and Policy