



March 1, 2022

Dear Senator:

On behalf of YWCA USA and the **121 local YWCAs from 40 states and the District of Columbia** who have joined this letter, **we write today to urge you to swiftly pass the bipartisan Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (VAWA)**. YWCA and its network of grassroots advocates are committed to reauthorizing this critical legislation and call on you to pass this bill and strengthen support services for survivors and their children.

For over 160 years, YWCA has been on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. In a typical year, we serve as many as 2 million women, girls and family members of all ages and backgrounds in more than 1,200 communities. As the largest network of domestic and sexual violence service providers, YWCAs remain on the frontlines providing gender-based violence services — including safe and secure housing, crisis hotlines, counseling, court assistance, family justice centers, and other community and safety programs—to more than 500,000 women, children, and families each year.

The results of [YWCA's fourth national survey of women across the United States](#) released earlier this month makes clear that women overwhelmingly need and support reauthorization of VAWA:

- 70% of women surveyed said that **reauthorizing VAWA was one of the most important or very important things Congress can do**<sup>i</sup>
- Women voters across demographic and party lines – **including 79% of Democrats, 68% of Independents, and 61% of Republicans** - overwhelmingly support this Congress passing VAWA
- 51% of GenZ women and 39% of Millennial women expressed concern about experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking or other gender-based violence – the very safety concerns that VAWA is intended to address.

In this moment of prolonged, health, economic, and social challenge for our nation, YWCAs see first-hand the importance of maintaining protections for all survivors in VAWA. During the COVID-19 pandemic, YWCAs who provided domestic violence shelter, sexual assault and domestic violence hotline assistance, and housing services have seen increases in demand for services, many reaching maximum capacity. While we are grateful that COVID-19 legislation provided support for domestic violence service providers like YWCA, to address the urgent crisis from the silent pandemic, reauthorization of VAWA coupled with financial support will be required to maintain long-term protections for survivors and their families.

Informed by our extensive history, the expertise of our nationwide network, and our collective commitment to meeting the needs of survivors and their families, **we call on you and your colleagues to**

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**cosponsor and pass the bipartisan VAWA.** This legislation will ensure survivor safety by providing the safety, resources, and protections critical to all survivors - particularly women of color and other marginalized communities – especially as we continue to address the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This bipartisan bill supports direct service programs until 2026 with significant investments that are deeply needed by survivors, their families, and the providers. Of particular importance, we are pleased the bipartisan VAWA bill:

- **Improves services for victims** including increases in the Legal Assistance for Victims grant program and significantly increases the funding for the Sexual Assault Services formula grant program to support rape crisis centers in all 50 states. These supportive services are particularly important as providers continue to adapt and address the increased needs resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic;
- **Expand access for survivors in rural areas and survivors requiring culturally-specific services, and establishes a grant program to support LGBTQ survivors along with specific steps to establish key position at the U.S. Department of Justice to coordinate and advise on VAWA programs to help culturally-specific communities;**
- **Invests in prevention** efforts for the consolidated youth grants to engage men and boys as allies, addresses children exposed to violence and trauma, changes the culture on college campuses, and invests significantly in preventing rape and sexual violence.

YWCA acknowledges that the bill presented before the U.S. Senate today requires additional improvements to ensure the long-term support for survivors. We look forward to continue working with you and your colleagues to:

- **Strengthen Housing Protections and Increase Resources for Transitional Housing**  
The Transitional Housing grant program, which supports YWCAs in at least 20 states, is critical to provide safe housing for survivors. We look forward to working with your office to include the extension and expansion of the Transitional Housing program and enhanced enforcement of VAWA's housing protections.
- **Improve the Economic Security of Survivors**  
YWCA looks forward to continuing to work with the Senate to improve the eligibility for unemployment insurance, strengthen protections against discrimination in employment based on survivor status, and increasing education on economic abuse and economic security related to survivors.
- **Close Loopholes to Reduce Intimate Partner Homicide**  
YWCA USA remains committed to closing the “boyfriend loophole” by adding the definition of ‘dating partner’ since half of intimate partner homicides are committed by dating partners.

As identified in [YWCA's Legislative Priorities for the 117th Congress](#), YWCA is committed to the swift passage of the bipartisan Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act. Immediate action is needed as the COVID-19 pandemic prolongs the strain on resources and the demand for assistance continue to rise

with this silent epidemic. **Once again, we urge you to cosponsor and pass the bipartisan Violence Against Women Act.**

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact Pam Yuen, YWCA USA Director of Government Relations, at [pyuen@ywca.org](mailto:pyuen@ywca.org) or 202-559-7022 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

YWCA USA

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<sup>i</sup> YWCA USA and Finn Partners, “YWomenVote 2022 Report,” February 2022, <https://ywomenvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/YWomenVote2022-JAN-Survey-Findings.pdf>