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For 160 years, YWCA has been at the forefront of the most pressing social movements, including action to prevent and address gender-based violence. Initially, the movement was survivor-led, and often volunteer-led, *by and for* survivors.

By the mid-1970s, YWCA advocates were around kitchen tables talking about “spousal abuse” and offering a safe place for domestic violence victims and their families. As these community-based domestic violence centers began springing up across the country, YWCAs played a pivotal role in framing the issue, convening conversations, pushing policies, and opening their doors to provide crisis services. As one example, in 1975, YWCA Sonoma County was founded by a group of local women who volunteered their own homes as an underground network of safe houses until a permanent domestic violence intervention residence was established.

Our advocacy helped spur national action. In 1984, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) created dedicated funding of domestic violence shelters and supportive services. Ten years later, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), a landmark bill to support survivors of gender-based violence.

Today, YWCA continues to be a national leader in protecting and promoting federal legislation that supports survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of gender-based violence. As part of our work, for more than 20 years, we have set aside one week in October as a **Week Without Violence**.

This year, we need your help.

FVPSA has expired. The House recently passed a bipartisan FVPSA bill to reauthorize the programs and funding for shelters, supportive services, prevention programs, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, and specialized resource centers. We now need the Senate to act.

VAWA is set to expire on September 30, 2018. Legislation has been introduced to extend VAWA through 2023. The bill would reauthorize VAWA with current protections for marginalized communities and make several improvements for survivors to provide economic security assistance, strengthen public housing protections, decrease the threat of domestic violence firearm homicides, focus on young victims, and increase community prevention of sexual violence and harassment by adding \$100 million for the Rape Prevention & Education program.

This guide offers simple tools and resources to empower you to influence local, state, and national policymakers to support survivors of gender-based violence and ultimately prevent this type of violence and abuse for future generations.

Thank you for joining with us during this year’s Week Without Violence from October 15 to 19 to raise awareness, demand action, and advocate for a swift reauthorization of VAWA and FVPSA. **Together, we can end gender-based violence.**

In solidarity,

Alejandra Y. Castillo, CEO, YWCA USA