



March 12, 2021

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of YWCA USA, a network of over 200 local associations in 45 states and the District of Columbia, I write today to **urge you to pass the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (VAWA) of 2021 (H.R. 1620)**. As identified in [YWCA's Legislative Priorities for the 117th Congress](#), YWCA is committed to the swift passage of VAWA in the first 100 days of the new legislative session. **We urge you to vote yes and support strengthening 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. Today, we serve over 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, over 150 YWCAs across 44 states remain on the front lines providing gender-based violence services. We are proud of our staff and volunteers in providing these life-saving services. YWCAs get up and do the work of providing safe and secure housing, crisis hotlines, counseling, court assistance, and other community and safety programs to more than 535,000 women, children, and families each year.

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 have seen first-hand the importance of maintaining protections for all survivors in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). This bill works to maintain the safety, resources, and protections critical to all survivors, particularly women of color and other marginalized communities. Of particular importance, VAWA includes the following YWCA supported provisions critical to survivors:

- **Improves services for victims by reauthoring programs** administered by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and U.S. Health and Human Services to prevent and address domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence, and stalking **while preserving and expanding housing protections for survivors;**
- **Increases authorization levels for response and wrap-around services** especially important following a year of increased strain on existing providers due to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- **Invests in prevention** through increased funding for programs such as the Consolidated Youth grants which support engaging men and boys as allies and addressing children exposed to violence and trauma with specialized services. This bill also provides support to State-level health programs to partner with domestic and sexual violence organizations to improve healthcare providers' ability to work with advocates, help victims, and strengthen prevention programs;
- **Closes loopholes** by improving enforcement of current federal domestic violence-related firearms laws and close loopholes to reduce firearm-involved abuse and intimate partner homicide, which has received bipartisan support;

- **Increases funding for culturally-specific service providers** and increases authorization levels to hold current providers harmless;
- **Improves the economic security of survivors** by expanding eligibility for unemployment insurance, strengthening protections against discrimination in employment based on survivor status, and increasing education on economic abuse and economic security related to survivors.

Immediate action by Congress is needed as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to put a strain on resources and the demand for assistance continues to rise with this silent epidemic. Survivors cannot wait another day for the critical protections identified in the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (VAWA) of 2021. **We urge you to vote yes on this critical bill.**

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

Sincerely,



Catherine V. Beane
Vice President of Public Policy & Advocacy