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ICADV RESPONSE AND SUPPORT: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (VAWA) REAUTHORIZATION

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is at the heart of our nation's response to domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and stalking. VAWA supports comprehensive, effective, and cost-saving responses to these crimes. Importantly, VAWA gives states and communities tools to help victims based on local and statewide needs and priorities. **We support the bi-partisan House-passed VAWA reauthorization bill (HR 1585) because it reflects the needs of victim service programs like ours to assist survivors.**

Each VAWA reauthorization bill provides an opportunity to improve our nation's response. We support a strong VAWA reauthorization with key improvements. We strongly oppose any rollbacks of protections gained in previous VAWA reauthorizations. Changes to VAWA should expand access to, and eliminate barriers to, justice, safety and services. Key things important to Iowa service providers include:

Housing: Enhance VAWA housing protections for survivors. VAWA funds help our state advance the goals of housing first/rapid re-housing in Iowa's restructured service delivery model. Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children. Most survivors served by Iowa programs request housing assistance.

Economic security: Financial abuse is behavior that controls a person's ability to acquire, use or maintain economic resources and occurs in virtually every case of domestic violence. It remains one of the most powerful methods of keeping a person trapped in the relationship because violent partners are acutely aware of the link between a victim's financial independence and her access to safety. Survivors face discrimination in employment and often need time off to address domestic violence, and we urge the VAWA reauthorization bill to enhance these protections.

Ensure Access/Non-discrimination to VAWA services: Ensure compliance with VAWA non-discrimination requirements and guarantee equal access to VAWA protections for all victims regardless of gender.

Increase Avenues for Justice: Allow communities to implement alternative justice responses that are focused on victim autonomy, agency and safety in order to provide resolution and restitution for victims.

Tribal jurisdictions: We support expanding the Tribal Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys Program that would enable tribal prosecutors to pursue DV-related crimes such as sexual assault, child abuse and trafficking on tribal lands. Currently the definition is limited to DV-specific crimes.



Homicide reduction: Iowa has a proud history of protecting domestic abuse victims from gun violence, requiring background checks for all handgun sales and enacting legislation in 2010 to ensure individuals convicted of domestic abuse surrender firearms. American women are as likely to be killed by dating partners as by spouses, and that is why we urge the Senate bill to maintain the provisions in the House-passed bill that closed the boyfriend loophole.

– Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence Staff and Board of Directors