



National Task Force to End Sexual & Domestic Violence

The Honorable Mike Enzi
Chairman
Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

October 16, 2017

Dear Chairman Enzi and Ranking Member Sanders:

As the Steering Committee of the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (“NTF”), comprised of national leadership organizations advocating on behalf of victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, we represent hundreds of organizations across the country dedicated to ensuring all survivors of violence receive the protections they deserve. Under the current budget proposal, survivors would be endangered in two ways – the likely reduction in funding for domestic violence and sexual assault programs, and the unsustainable cuts to safety net programs upon which survivors rely. For this reason, we do not support the passage of S. Con. Res. 25, and we urge you to reject the Senate Budget proposal, and fully invest in non-defense discretionary funding (NDD) and entitlement programs.

NDD funding has been drastically reduced over the past several years, undermining programs that serve some of the country’s most vulnerable populations. NDD funding provides money for important programs that support victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. Additionally, it funds job training, education, nutrition, housing, public services, and more. The Senate budget plan would reduce NDD funding by \$800 billion over the next decade.

Almost 100% of domestic violence victims experience financial abuse - ranging from an abusive partner taking out loans and accruing debt in a victim’s name, to preventing them from working or interfering with their employment, to controlling their money. The lack of financial resources is an enormous barrier to a victim’s safety and security. Many victims of domestic violence leave their abuser with little or no money. For sexual assault survivors, economic strain due to employment interruptions and the impacts of trauma can be severe. Access to resources is critical. The effects of violence are long-lasting and can further keep domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking victims in poverty as they struggle to heal and address the completely unexpected long-term financial repercussions of victimization. NDD funding is critical to helping victims overcome financial abuse.

NDD funding allows for investment in critical programs like the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA). VAWA and FVPSA programs are at the heart of our nation’s response to domestic violence and sexual assault. Both of these programs are critical to ensuring that victims are safe, that offenders are held accountable, and that our communities are more secure. Key programs in VAWA provide services such as transitional housing and law enforcement response. FVPSA funds emergency shelters, crisis lines, counseling, victim assistance, and other vital services for over 1.3 million domestic violence victims and their children each year.

Further, cuts to safety net programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, SNAP/food stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and Supplemental Security Income would be devastating for victims who often rely on these important resources to escape abuse and rebuild their lives. These programs create a vital safety net for victims who are struggling to meet their own needs and the needs of their families. Preliminary data from a recent survey of the

field by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV) shows that 88% of advocates reported that the SNAP program is a very critical resource for domestic violence and sexual assault victims, with 80% reporting that most domestic violence victims use SNAP to help address their basic needs, and establish safety and stability for themselves and their children. SNAP allows victims to access the food they need for themselves and their children relatively quickly, and gives victims and their families the resources they need to stay away from their abusive partner.

Likewise, 85% of advocates indicated that TANF is very critical for domestic violence and sexual assault victims, and more than two-thirds reported that most domestic violence victims they serve rely on TANF to establish safety and stability. However, despite TANF being such a vital resource, over 50% of advocates also noted that most domestic violence victims were unable to access TANF benefits when they needed them. Overlooked barriers that low-income survivors of domestic violence face, like transportation or child care, make it difficult or impossible for victims to meet with caseworkers, obtain or keep a job, or meet the other requirements for TANF.

All of these entitlement programs and NDD programs are crucial for victims in planning how they'll leave their abuser or recover from sexual assault. Economic security helps survivors live independently after fleeing abuse and helps them keep their families safe. The lifesaving nature of these domestic and sexual violence programs, other NDD programs, and safety net programs cannot be overstated. Without these resources, countless domestic violence survivors would be trapped in dangerous relationships or suffering the repercussions of assault without needed support systems. We need a budget that provides crucial investments in both essential benefits and NDD programs.

We urge you to reject the Senate Budget Resolution, and fully invest in non-defense discretionary funding and social safety net programs. We look forward to working with you as the budget process moves toward completion to ensure that adequate funding is available for the vital programs detailed above, which are crucial investments in our communities. They save lives, rebuild families, conserve resources, and prevent future crimes. If you have any questions as you work on these issues, please contact Michelle Mitchell, NNEDV, at mmitchell@nnedv.org or Terri Poore, NAESV, at terri@endsexualviolence.org.

Sincerely,

The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence

Cc: Senate Budget Committee
United States Senate