



## Statement Calling on the Senate to Champion Critical Supports for Survivors

June 2, 2020

The National Task Force to End Sexual & Domestic Violence (NTF) **reiterates and underscores the importance of the full platform of urgent recommendations for COVID-19 relief** to help survivors and the programs that serve them as reflected in the [sign-on letter to Congress endorsed by over 450 agencies](#). This assistance is crucial in the face of the [unprecedented and rising challenges to survivors' safety and well-being that the pandemic presents](#). Moreover, the Senate has a unique opportunity ahead to help **remedy profound historic inequities**, always present for Black, Indigenous and people of color communities but more sharply felt now.

**This high-level summary of what has been excluded or included from survivor-specific supports in COVID-19 legislation to date is meant only as a starting point, not a resting place, for Senate negotiations in the coming weeks:**

- **Excluded, and protection gaps must urgently be filled:**

**None of the COVID-19 packages to date have directly addressed the needs of sexual assault programs or communities of color. The NTF urges the Senate to close gaps that will otherwise leave traumatized and marginalized survivors at acute risk, by including in COVID-19 legislation:**

- **\$100 million** in additional funding for the Sexual Assault Services Program (OVW, DOJ) to assist rape crisis centers in transitioning to virtual services and meeting the emergency needs of survivors. (For more information, click [here](#).)
- **\$40 million** in funding through the Family Violence Prevention and Services Program (HHS) to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on racial and ethnic minority communities by providing culturally specific services and support to women and youth of color who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. (For more information, click [here](#).)

**The pandemic has also laid bare other underlying vulnerabilities of survivors that must urgently be addressed**, such as **ensuring that full access to unemployment insurance is available to survivors** who need to leave employment due to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, and **preventing the detention or deportation of immigrant survivors** with pending applications for protection under the Violence Against Women Act / Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

- **Included, but serious shortfalls remain:**

The NTF appreciates that some supplemental funding was included in the HEROES Act for programs and services under the **Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)** and **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)**; and that “match” requirements normally imposed on programs funded under FVPSA and VAWA were temporarily waived. Yet the amounts allocated to survivor-serving programs were a fraction of what is desperately needed for services and housing, and the mechanism for distribution is problematic. Among other concerns, equitable resources must be provided **directly to Tribal governments**, with respect to Tribal sovereignty, to reach survivors in Tribal communities where resources to respond to COVID-19 are scarce. **The Senate should take up provisions to bolster FVPSA and VAWA funding streams and to provide for “match waivers”;** and moreover, **should increase amounts and improve statutory language to ensure funds swiftly reach programs on the frontlines.**

- **Included, and critical to address this crisis and sustain survivor services long-term:**

States are facing cuts to their **Crime Victims Fund (CVF)** grants because deposits for the **Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)** have plummeted. The HEROES Act ensured CVF's solvency by directing additional deposits to the CVF from funds collected by the Department of Justice (DOJ) under deferred or non-prosecution agreements). **To ensure the CVF's solvency and the sustainability of services to survivors, the Senate should likewise direct additional deposits to the CVF from fines assessed by the DOJ and provide for “match waivers” for VOCA grants.**