

[Date]

[Greeting]

On behalf of [*insert your name or organization here*], [*we/I*] would like to thank you for your efforts toward the passage of the **Violence Against Women Act of 2005** (VAWA). Because of your commitment to the issue, and the diligence of your staff, the tremendously **successful** VAWA has been reauthorized for another five years and has been expanded in key ways. As an [*individual/organization*] attuned to the unique needs of [*insert program specific information here – i.e. unique needs of children, teens and young adults, etc.*] *we/I* would like to particularly thank you for including the **essential new programs** in VAWA that focus resources on preventing violence and providing services, protections and justice for young victims of violence. [**We/I**] **request that you, as well as every member of Congress, support the full funding of all existing, as well as newly created programs under the VAWA.**

Young people across America experience and witness violence at inordinately high rates and often face unique barriers in getting help to address it.

- Girls and young women between 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence
- In one year, over 4,000 incidents of rape and sexual assault occurred in public schools across the country; two-thirds of sexual assault victims are under the age of 18
- In a college study, only 5% of all attempted or completed rapes were reported to law enforcement
- According to one study, 5% of abusive fathers threaten during visitation to kill the mother, 34% of fathers threaten to kidnap their children and 25% threaten to hurt their children

Full funding of VAWA will bring long-needed attention to this violence witnessed and experienced by children and youth. VAWA specifically addresses these issues by:

- Providing \$15 million each year in grants to provide specialized services to teens and young adults who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking;
- Providing demonstration grants to courts to work with law enforcement, service providers, schools and others to develop policies and procedures to insure justice for young victims and perpetrators of violence;
- Authorizing \$20 million for “Safe Havens” which will protect children and parents from domestic and sexual violence during supervised child visitation and visitation exchanges;
- Funding programs that provide services for children exposed to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, which may include direct counseling, advocacy, or mentoring, and helps support their non-abusing parents as well;

- Focuses new resources to engage men and boys as allies in preventing and ending domestic and sexual violence.

Additionally, VAWA provides funds for:

- Training and Collaboration on the Intersection between Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment, bringing together child welfare agencies, courts, domestic or dating violence service providers, law enforcement and other community organizations to enhance responses to families where there is both child abuse and neglect and dating or domestic violence;
- Middle and high schools to help them develop appropriate policies and procedures to address violence committed against or by students;
- Prevention, including programs that would support gender-specific mentoring and support for boys and girls who need information on positive, non-violent relationships.

Responding to children and youth who are victims or witnesses of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking is a critical step in increasing the safety of individuals and families. By including provisions to address violence affecting young people, the new VAWA 2005 represents a big step forward toward stopping the violence.

[Insert personal information: How your organization would benefit from the new children and youth programs created in VAWA 2005. Include local statistics or a specific need for these programs. Why is this important to you?]

It is critical that you make **full funding of VAWA a top priority**, including the programs that address the unique needs of children and youth victimized by violence. We feel confident that we can count on you to support the full funding of all existing and newly created programs under VAWA.

Please feel free to contact [*contact person*] at [*contact information*] for further information about the impact of domestic and sexual violence on youth in [*your state, city, or region*].

Sincerely,