

May 14, 2012

U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Member of Congress:

As a diverse coalition of immigration, faith, labor, human rights and community organizations serving and advocating on behalf of immigrant victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking we write to express our grave concerns and opposition to H.R. 4970, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2012 (VAWA) (Adams, R-FL).

As passed by the House Judiciary Committee, H.R. 4970 effectively eradicates protections that have been available for almost twenty years to immigrant victims of violence leaving them vulnerable and at risk of further harm for their abusers.

Enacted in 1994 and reauthorized twice in 2000 and 2005, VAWA has a long history of uniting lawmakers with the common purpose of protecting survivors of domestic violence. When VAWA was first conceived, Congress recognized that the noncitizen status of battered immigrants can make them particularly vulnerable to crimes of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. The abusers of undocumented immigrants often exploit the victims' immigration status, leaving the victim afraid to seek services or report the abuse to law enforcement and making them fearful of assisting with the investigation and prosecution of these crimes. Congress sought to address this through the enactment of provisions in VAWA that enhance safety for victims and their children and provide an important tool for law enforcement to investigate and prosecute crimes.

HR 4970 endangers victims, and undoes years of bipartisan progress made in previous VAWA legislation by once again taking us to a time before 1994 when abusers were allowed to use immigration status a tool for further abuse.

The changes proposed in H.R. 4970 to VAWA's current protections for immigrant survivors eliminate important confidentiality protections, undermine current anti-fraud protections, and roll back years of progress and commitment on the part of Congress to protect vulnerable immigrant victims.

VAWA, including the immigration provisions, has always been focused on protecting victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and trafficking; this should not change. On Wednesday, when H.R. 4970 is brought to the floor of the House of Representatives, we urge you to vote **NO** to H.R. 4970, a law that is not VAWA as it goes against the core of VAWA by eliminating protections for victims and placing victims in danger.

Each year the lives of hundreds of women, children, and others who fall victim to domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking are made safer by important programs the law created. On their behalf and on behalf of all others who will depend upon VAWA in years to come, we ask for your vigilance in preserving VAWA's central purpose.

Because of the serious concerns outlined above, the full House must act to defeat these dangerous amendments to VAWA that curtail protections and ensure continued abuse. We ask you and all members of Congress to strongly oppose H.R. 4970.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mony Ruiz-Velasco, National Immigrant Justice Center at 312.660.1360 or via email at [mruizvelasco@heartlandalliance.org](mailto:mruizvelasco@heartlandalliance.org) or Grace Huang, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence at 206.389.2515 or via email at [grace@wscadv.org](mailto:grace@wscadv.org).

Sincerely,

Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc.  
African Services Committee  
Alianza Latina en Contra la Agresión Sexual  
Alliance for Immigrants Rights & Reform - Michigan  
American Gateways  
American Immigration Lawyers Association  
American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), Washington Chapter  
American Jewish Committee  
Americans for Immigrant Justice, Inc.  
Artemis Justice Center  
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Asian Pacific American Legal Center, a Member of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice  
Asian Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence  
Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach  
ASISTA  
Ayuda  
Bangladeshi American Democratic Caucus of Michigan  
Bangladeshi American Democratic Caucus  
Boesche Legal Clinic, University of Tulsa College of Law  
Break the Cycle  
California Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence  
Caminar Latino  
Campaign for Community Change  
Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition  
Casa Cornelia Law Center  
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities  
CASA de Maryland, Inc.  
Casa de Proyecto Libertad  
Casa Esperanza  
Center for Family Policy & Practice  
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies  
Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Inc.  
Center for Victim and Human Rights  
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers  
Central American Resource Center  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles

Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking  
Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Community Action Network  
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto  
Community Refugee and Immigration Services  
Community Solutions  
Connecticut Legal Services, Inc.  
Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project  
DREAM Activist Virginia  
Enlace Comunitario  
Equal Justice Center  
Esperanza Peace and Justice Center  
Families and the Law Clinic, Columbus School of Law, Catholic University of America  
Family Counseling Services of Greater Miami, Inc.  
Farmworker Justice  
Florida Coastal Immigrant Rights  
Florida Coastal Immigrant Rights Clinic  
Franciscan Action Network  
Freedom Network (USA)  
Fuerza Latina  
Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network  
Georgia Asylum and Immigration Network (GAIN)  
Gibbs Houston Pauw  
Gulfcoast Legal Services  
Haven Women's Center of Stanislaus  
HAVEN, Oakland County Michigan  
Hawai'i Coalition for Immigration Reform  
Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society  
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society - Pennsylvania  
Holy Cross Ministries of Utah  
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas  
Human Rights Watch  
Immigrant Defense Project  
Immigrant Legal Center of Boulder County  
Immigrant Rights Clinic, Rutgers School of Law - Newark  
Immigration Equality  
International Institute of the Bay Area  
Iowa Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church  
Jane Doe Inc.  
Jewish Women International  
Just Neighbors  
Justice For Our Neighbors  
Kentucky Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
Kentucky Domestic Violence Association  
Korean American Resource & Cultural Center

Korean Resource Center  
Latin American Association  
Latina/o Bar Association of Washington  
LatinoJustice PRDLEF  
Legal Aid Service of Collier County  
Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis  
Legal Aid Society of Rochester, New York  
Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association, Inc.  
Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center  
Legal Momentum  
Legal Services for Children  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service  
Lutheran Social Services of New England  
Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence  
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition  
Maui International Language School  
Michigan Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
Michigan Indo-American Democratic Caucus  
Michigan Muslim Democratic Caucus  
Midwest Association of Farmworker Organizations  
Midwest Association of Farmworker Organizations  
Mil Mujeres  
Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women  
Mountain Crisis Services  
Mujeres Latinas En Accion  
My Sister's Place (New York)  
My Sister's Place, Inc. (D.C.)  
Nassau County Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National African Immigrant and Refugee Women's Network  
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Center for Victims of Crime  
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
National Coalition for LGBT Health  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of La Raza  
National Domestic Violence Hotline  
National Employment Law Project  
National Hispanic Council on Aging  
National Immigrant Justice Center  
National Immigration Forum  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild  
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

National Network to End Domestic Violence  
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence  
Neighbors in Support of Immigrants  
Network for Victim Recovery of DC  
Nevada Hispanic Services Inc.  
New Mexico Asian Family Center  
New York Anti-Trafficking Network  
New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
New Bridges Immigrant Resource Center  
North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
North Carolina Stop Human Trafficking  
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project  
Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence  
Paso del Norte Civil Rights Project  
Physicians for Human Rights  
Political Asylum Immigration Representation Project  
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada  
Public Justice Center  
RAICES  
Refuge House, Inc.  
Refugio del Rio Grande, Inc.  
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network  
SEPA Mujer Inc., Servicios para el Avance de la Mujer  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)  
Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network  
Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center  
Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine  
Sexual Violence Center  
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S.  
Sierra County Victim Assistance Unit  
Sisters of Mercy Institute Justice Team  
Sisters of Mercy South Central Community  
Social Justice Action Network  
South Asian Americans Leading Together  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
Student Action with Farmworkers  
Tahirih Justice Center  
The Advocates for Human Rights  
The Kansas/Missouri Dream Alliance  
The Legal Aid Society  
The Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County  
The P.E.A.C.E\*. Initiative  
The United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
Transgender Law Center  
UFW Foundation

Unid@s, The National Latin@ LGBT Human Rights Organization  
United Migrant Opportunity Services/UMOS Inc.  
University of Miami, School of Nursing & Health Studies  
Vermont Immigration and Asylum Advocates  
Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence  
Violence Intervention Program  
Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations  
Voces de la Frontera  
Voces Unidas for Justice  
Voices of Immigrants in Action/Rural Women's Health Project  
Volunteer Attorneys for Rural Nevadans  
Walnut Avenue Women's Center  
Washington Defender Association's Immigration Project  
Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
WeCount!  
Who Is My Neighbor? Inc.  
Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Women Against Abuse  
Women's Crisis Support ~ Defensa de Mujeres  
Women's Law Project  
Women's Refugee Commission  
Worker Justice Center of New York  
Workers Rights Clinic  
Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault