

February 4, 2013

U.S. Senate  
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Member of Congress:

As a diverse coalition of immigrant and civil rights, 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 with and our opposition to the amendment introduced by Senator Grassley to the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act in 2012 (S. 1925) and which may be introduced again in the VAWA Reauthorization Act of 2013 (S. 47). The amendment attempts to use VAWA as a back door to address other immigration matters that are irrelevant to the focus of VAWA, thus threatening to undermine the integrity and purpose of VAWA. This non-germane amendment, which was included in the Judiciary committee markups of VAWA without advance warning, was subsequently opposed by many national immigration advocacy and civil rights organizations. While we applaud the sponsors and co-sponsors of S.47 for not including this provision in the reintroduction of VAWA, we urge all Senators to oppose any attempts to reattach this non-germane and harmful amendment to the VAWA bill on the Senate floor.

Since the enactment of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994, Congress has recognized that immigrant victims of domestic violence and sexual assault face significant and particular barriers to seeking safety and justice, finding that control over a victim's immigration status, or a lack of status, is often used as a tool of abuse. As a result, Congress has enacted important immigration remedies, such as the VAWA self-petition, U-visa and T-visa, to encourage victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking to seek help and safety for themselves and their children and to hold perpetrators accountable.

Any proposals to change the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) that are irrelevant to VAWA's focus on domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking and human trafficking should be kept out of VAWA.

Senator Grassley's amendment, elevating a third drunk driving conviction to the status of an aggravated felony for the purposes of immigration removal, does not belong in VAWA. Should Senator Grassley or another senator attempt once more to amend S. 47 to expand aggravated felonies unrelated to VAWA, it will undermine VAWA's purpose and potentially open up VAWA in the future to many other non-germane and harmful provisions that can act as "poison pills." When this amendment was attached to the VAWA bill in 2012, it was the first time since VAWA was first enacted in 1994 and subsequently reauthorized on two occasions, that VAWA was hijacked as a vehicle to make changes to the Immigration and

Nationality Act that are not germane and undermine its focus on addressing domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking and human trafficking.

VAWA is not the place to include such a provision, let alone debate its merits. However, a debate on the merits surely would be necessary in another venue since such an amendment raises due process concerns and reverses established Supreme Court precedence on such matters.

VAWA has a long history of uniting lawmakers who may not agree on other policy issues but who have the common purpose of protecting survivors. Each year the lives of thousands 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 and protections that VAWA 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.

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  
Acorn Outreach  
African Services Committee  
Alaska Institute for Justice  
American Immigration Lawyers Association  
American Jewish Committee  
Andrea Ramos, Southwestern Law School, Immigration Law Clinic  
Annunciation House Inc.  
Apna Ghar  
Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Artemis Justice Center  
Asian Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence  
ASISTA Immigration Assistance  
Barbara Hines, Immigration Clinic, University of Texas School of Law  
Barrier Free Living Family of Companies  
Breakthrough  
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence  
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities  
Casa De Proyecto Libertad

Catholic Charities of Baltimore  
Catholic Charities of Fort Worth  
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago  
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Newark (New Jersey)  
Center Against Domestic Violence  
Center for Community Change  
Center for Gender and Refugee Studies, Hastings College of the Law  
Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Inc.  
Clinical Law Office University of Maryland Carey School of Law  
Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Community Legal Center  
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto  
Connecticut Legal Services  
Domestic Abuse Intervention Program  
DREAM Activist Virginia  
East Bay Sanctuary Covenant  
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project  
Florida Coastal Immigrant Rights Clinic  
Futures Without Violence  
[Gangashakti.org](http://Gangashakti.org)  
Good Shepherd Services  
HAVEN  
Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
HIAS Pennsylvania  
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas  
Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence  
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
Immigrant Defense Project  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center  
Immigration Center for Women and Children  
inMotion, Inc.  
Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Justice For Our Neighbors - Nebraska  
Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence  
Kentucky Domestic Violence Association  
Latin American Association, Inc.  
Laura F. Bachman, Boesche Legal Clinic, University of Tulsa College of Law  
Legal Aid Service of Collier County  
Legal Momentum  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Lutheran Social Services of New England  
Michigan Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
Mil Mujeres  
Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence  
Moloka'i Community Service Council  
Mujeres Latinas en Acción  
Nassau County Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health  
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
National Coalition for LGBT Health  
National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs  
National Congress of American Indians  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Domestic Workers Alliance  
National Immigrant Justice Center  
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health  
National Network to End Domestic Violence  
National Organization for Women  
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence  
Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc.  
New Mexico Asian Family Center  
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project  
Ohio Domestic Violence Network  
OneAmerica  
Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence  
Political Asylum/Immigration Representation Project  
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada  
Public Justice Center  
Refugio del Rio Grande  
SEPA Mujer Inc  
Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center  
Sierra County Victim Assistance Unit  
SIROW--University of Arizona, Immigrant Social Services Coord. & Advocate  
South Carolina Victim Assistance Network  
Student Action with Farmworkers  
Tahirih Justice Center

The Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking  
The Reformed Church of Highland Park, NJ  
Unid@s, The National Latin@ LGBT Human Rights Organization  
Urban Resource Institute  
Vermont Immigration and Asylum Advocates  
Violence Intervention Program  
Virgil Wiebe, Director of Immigration Law Clinic, University of St. Thomas School of Law  
Virginia Poverty Law Center  
Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance  
Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Who Is My Neighbor? Inc.  
Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Women Helping Women  
Women of Color Network  
Women's Advocate  
Women's Law Center of Maryland  
Worker Justice Center of New York  
YWCA USA









