



NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

December 20, 2019

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

To Senator Feinstein:

On behalf of the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), I write to express support for the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019 (S.2843). The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) provides crucial, life-saving resources for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. These resources ensure that victims can safely leave a dangerous situation, find safe, affordable, and accessible housing, and successfully rebuild their lives.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition is solely dedicated to achieving socially just public policy that ensures people with the lowest incomes in the United States have affordable, accessible, and decent homes. NLIHC members include state and local affordable housing coalitions, residents of public and assisted housing, nonprofit housing providers, homeless service providers, fair housing organizations, researchers, faith-based organizations, public housing agencies, private developers and property owners, local and state government agencies, and concerned citizens. While our members include the spectrum of housing interests, we do not represent any segment of the housing industry. Rather, we work on behalf of and with low-income people who receive and those who need federal housing assistance, especially extremely low-income people and people who are experiencing homelessness.

Access to safe, accessible, affordable housing is fundamental to a victim's ability to leave violence and find the stability they need to thrive. Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness among women and children,¹ and between 22 and 57 percent of women experiencing homelessness cite domestic violence as the primary cause of their homelessness.² Despite the central role housing plays in keeping victims safe, the need for affordable housing far outpaces availability: while 84 percent of survivors in domestic violence shelters report needing assistance finding affordable housing, less than half actually receive housing services.²

Housing helps keep victims who have fled an abuser from returning to a life-threatening situation, and in its absence, victims are forced to make an impossible choice between

¹ "The Impact of Safe Housing on Survivors of Domestic Violence," National Network to End Domestic Violence (2019).
https://nnedv.org/spotlight_on/impact-safe-housing-survivors/

² "16 Things You May Not Know About Housing for Survivors," National Network to End Domestic Violence (2019).
https://nnedv.org/latest_update/16-things-may-not-know-housing-survivors/

homelessness and returning to an abuser. The enhanced housing protections outlined in S.2843 are vital to ensuring victims of violence are able to remain safely housed and are not punished for the criminal activity of their abuser. Moreover, these protections establish victims' right to decide for themselves whether they want to find new housing or remain in their current home. Such protections not only bolster victims' ability to remain stably housed, but also reinforce their autonomy and ability to decide what is best for themselves and their families. The protections enshrined in VAWA are of particular importance to Native victims and victims who are members of the LGBTQ community, both of whom are disproportionately more likely to experience domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

NLIHC stands united with our partners in pushing for the comprehensive provisions outlined in S.2843. We urge the Senate to swiftly pass the bill with bipartisan support to ensure the vital resources authorized in the Violence Against Women Act can continue helping victims escape violence and find the stability they need to thrive.

If you have any questions, or need additional information, please contact NLIHC policy analyst Kim Johnson at kjohnson@nlihc.org or 202-662-1530.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane Yentel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Diane Yentel
President and CEO