



Hagan Introduces the Violence Against Women Health Initiative

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Kay R. Hagan (NC) will today introduce the Violence Against Women Health Initiative to raise awareness of domestic violence for health care providers allowing them to better assess and treat survivors of domestic violence.

“October is Domestic Violence Awareness month, but this is a problem that demands attention 365 days a year,” said Hagan. **“The rates of violence and abuse in our country are astounding and unacceptable, and domestic violence has a significant impact on our country’s health, costing our system over \$8.3 billion annually. This bill will streamline efforts to prevent and respond to domestic partner violence. I urge my colleagues to join me and support this bill so that we may work together – Democrats and Republicans – towards a safer and healthier future for our women and families.”**

Since its passage in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) has transformed our criminal justice system and social service system, helping to prevent and respond to domestic violence. The last reauthorization of VAWA, set to expire this year, included a new title authorizing three programs that support the health system’s efforts to help victims, preventing further abuse and improving the health status of women.

Hagan’s bill would consolidate the existing three health programs into one program, while increasing evaluation and accountability. Specifically, this bill would:

1. Foster public health responses to intimate partner violence and sexual violence
2. Provide training and education of health professionals to respond to violence and abuse
3. Support research on effective public health approaches to end violence against women

Hagan worked with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) on including the research portion of her bill.

“As a researcher and advocate, I know firsthand that this bill will contribute to closer examination of the causes and consequences of violence and will lead to increased public awareness and better training for health care providers,” said Dr. Jacquelyn White, a professor of psychology at UNCG and co-chair of the National Partnership to End Interpersonal Violence (NPEIV). “It has been an honor to work with Senator Hagan and her staff on this bill that I believe will foster much needed collaboration between researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and the community to strengthen the public health response to intimate partner violence and sexual assault.”

Nearly one in four women in the US has reported experiencing domestic violence at some point in her life. In 2007, there were 248,300 reported incidents of sexual assault in the US. Young women experience the highest rates of sexual assault and stalking. And sadly, 15.5 million children in the US live in families in which partner violence has occurred in the past year, and seven million children live in families in which severe partner violence has occurred.

Domestic violence has a significant impact on our country’s health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), intimate partner violence costs the health care system over \$8.3 billion annually.

"This bill is an important recognition of the role that health providers play in fighting domestic and sexual assault by continuing the authorization for the health programs in the Violence Against Women Act," said Esta Soler, President and Founder of Futures Without Violence. "We commend Senator Hagan for leading the effort to see that domestic and sexual violence is a health care problem and this initiative is one more tool at our disposal to engage the health system to identify victims early and partner to get those help. It's time – past time – that we use every tool at our disposal to identify and help victims of violence."

The following organizations have endorsed Hagan’s bill: American Academy of Nursing, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Dental Association, American Medical Association, National Association of Social Workers, International Association of Forensic Nurses, National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, Jewish Women International, Nursing Network on Violence Against Women International, American Psychological Association, Futures Without Violence, National Center on DV, Trauma, and Mental Health, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards, National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators, Casa de Esperanza, Academy on Violence and Abuse, Men Can Stop Rape, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, Witness Justice, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), The Violence Prevention Coalition of Greater Los Angeles, YWCA USA.