

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 29, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
United States Senate Committee on  
Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman  
United States Senate Committee on  
Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nina Lowey  
Chairwoman  
United States House Committee on  
Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
United States House Committee on  
Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chairwoman Lowey, and Ranking Member Granger:

We write to bring your attention to the urgent need for housing resources for victims of domestic violence during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. We also write to recognize the work that has been done in New Hampshire to address this need and request that any future COVID-19 relief legislation include solutions and funding that address the housing needs of domestic violence victims.

A recent United Nations brief highlights the emerging link between social distancing measures taken during the COVID-19 pandemic and an increase in domestic violence.<sup>1</sup> According to the brief, reports of domestic violence “have increased in several countries as security, health, and money worries create tensions and strains accentuated by the cramped and confined living conditions of lockdown.”<sup>2</sup> While public health experts continue to advise Americans to stay at

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5006>

<sup>2</sup> Id.

home for their own safety, for victims of domestic violence, staying home with their abusers could be extremely dangerous. Victims of domestic violence and their children need places to stay where they can practice social distancing while also remaining safe from their abusers.

New Hampshire has been a leader in addressing this emerging link between social distancing measures and the rise in domestic violence, dedicating resources to serve and house survivors. Last week, Governor Sununu approved a grant application from the New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, ensuring dedicated funding and resources for victims of domestic and sexual violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of the New Hampshire Congressional delegation have signed on to numerous letters to federal agencies requesting that they take steps to increase the resources and services available to domestic violence victims nationwide.

We appreciate that the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act* contained \$45 million in funding for domestic violence services through the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act and \$2 million for the National Domestic Violence Hotline. We are also encouraged that the CARES Act includes funding for the Legal Services Corporation and Emergency Solutions Grants, which can be used to address some of the legal and housing needs of individuals who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence.

However, more is needed to address this urgent public health crisis. Any future COVID-19 legislation must contain additional funding and measures that address the housing needs of domestic violence victims. These measures could take many forms, such as through additional grant program funding, housing vouchers, or partnerships with hotels to house domestic violence victims in currently vacant rooms. And future legislation should recognize, expand and support the important work happening at the state level, in places like New Hampshire, to help victims and survivors of domestic violence.

We urge you to support victims and survivors of domestic violence and recognize the work that Granite Staters have taken to address this problem. Thank you for your attention to this important matter and your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress

Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress