

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I am a supporter and cosponsor of the Conyers/Moore VAWA amendment – a substitute amendment for H.R. 4970 which is scheduled for consideration by the House tomorrow.

Since 1994, VAWA has strengthened communities and provided critical, life-saving support to victims of violence. VAWA has helped millions of victims move from crisis to stability and has saved taxpayers millions in averted societal costs.

VAWA reauthorization must continue the fight to protect all victims – including immigrants, Native Americans and members of the LGBT community – and their families from the fear of violence.

Unfortunately, for the first time in VAWA's history it appears as though we will not have a bipartisan reauthorization bill.

Even worse, H.R. 4970 is a step backwards.

While there are many problems with the bill, I want to focus on the provisions regarding battered immigrant women. Ensuring that immigrant women are able to leave their abusers and aren't forced to stay because of threats of deportation, or because they are afraid to come out of the shadows has been a long-time focus of mine.

H.R. 4970 destroys years of work to protect immigrant women and creates more obstacles for these victims to report crimes.

H.R. 4970 would weaken and undermine the confidentiality requirements that victims rely on to ensure their safety, as well as the safety of their children. Victim safety is a core VAWA principle.

H.R. 4970 would allow for the consideration of uncorroborated abuser statements – raising the standard of proof for battered victims. It would also place unnecessary burdens on victims by requiring additional interviews for battered immigrants.

H.R. 4970 would limit U visa protections and add restrictive certification requirements that will only discourage victim cooperation with law enforcement. Many law enforcement agencies have called on Congress to increase – not restrict – U visa protections. The U visa was put in place to encourage victims to come forward to report their crimes and in turn, receive help.

The Conyers/Moore amendment is closely modeled on the Senate-passed bipartisan VAWA reauthorization bill.

The Senate bill passed with bipartisan support on April 26, 2012. Every woman in the Senate voted for the bill which would further strengthen and improve programs authorized under VAWA.

These are critical programs that assist victims and survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. And, VAWA reauthorization must continue the fight to protect all victims – including immigrants, Native Americans and members of the LGBT community – and their families from the fear of violence.

The Conyers/Moore amendment includes protections for immigrant, tribal and LGBT survivors of abuse under VAWA.

The Conyers/Moore amendment recognizes that violence doesn't just affect victims; it affects their children, too.

The Conyers/Moore amendment recognizes that victims should not be treated differently because of their ethnicity or sexuality.

We must remain firm in our commitment to ensure that all victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and trafficking have meaningful access to protection under the law.

I hope that you will make the Conyers/Moore substitute amendment in order. The House must be given the opportunity to vote on an alternative to H.R. 4970 which is widely opposed by victims' rights organizations, and severely lacking in input from Democrats, service providers, law enforcement agencies, and prosecutors on the front lines.

Thank you.