

September 26, 2024

The Honorable Dick Durbin  
Chair  
Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jim Jordan  
Chair  
House Committee on the Judiciary  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Nadler  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on the Judiciary  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Durbin, Chair Jordan, Ranking Member Graham, and Ranking Member Nadler:

As the undersigned national, state, and local organizations, we write to express our strong support for the Sexual Abuse Services in Detention Act (S. 1422/ H.R. 9835, led by Senators Brian Schatz (D-HI) and John Cornyn (R-TX) and Representatives Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA), Kelly Armstrong (R-ND), and Hank Johnson (D-GA). The legislation would expand emotional support services for sexual abuse survivors in prisons, jails, and other types of detention facilities, including confidential hotline and crisis intervention services.

Every year, roughly 200,000 people are sexually abused in U.S detention facilities.<sup>1</sup> In addition, an overwhelming number of incarcerated people have endured sexual abuse prior to their incarceration – including 86 percent of women in jails.<sup>2</sup> Despite the staggeringly high rates of trauma behind bars, incarcerated people rarely have access to emotional support services. To address this critical issue, SASIDA would fund programs and trainings to build the capacity of rape crisis and corrections officials in delivering services behind bars, ensuring that survivors get the help they need and deserve.

Our organizations represent a range of stakeholders that include policymakers; rape crisis advocates; corrections leaders; survivors of sexual abuse in the community and behind bars; and the nearly two million people who are currently incarcerated in the U.S. We are united in the belief that sexual abuse is *not* part of the penalty — and that the people who endure this violence must get quality services that are equal to what is available in the community.

Since their release in 2012, the National Prison Rape Elimination (PREA) Standards have paved the way for incarcerated survivors to receive outside services. Crucially, the PREA standards — which were required by 2003 bipartisan law of the same name — paved the way for victim

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<sup>1</sup> National Standards To Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Prison Rape, 28 CFR 115 (Department of Justice, 2012), available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2012-12427/p-1245>

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Swavola, et al, Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform, (Vera Institute of Justice, 2016), pg. 11, [www.vera.org/downloads/publications/overlooked-women-and-jails-report-updated.pdf](http://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/overlooked-women-and-jails-report-updated.pdf)

advocates outside of correctional systems to give support to incarcerated survivors.<sup>3</sup> Yet only a fraction of 7,000 jails, prisons, and youth facilities nationwide have agreements in place to provide outside services to the people in their custody. While many community rape crisis centers are willing to work with survivors behind bars, their resources are already stretched to the limit serving the outside community. What's more, the dynamics of sexual violence in detention facilities — which overwhelmingly affects men — are less familiar to many rape crisis advocates. The learning curve is even steeper for corrections staff, who have limited working knowledge of the trauma-informed programming that outside advocates can provide. Moreover, the recent sexual abuse cases and ensuing crisis at the Federal Correctional Institution in Dublin, California is a painful reminder that a great deal more work is needed to keep people safe inside our correctional facilities.

The Sexual Abuse Services in Detention Act will improve the availability and quality of emotional support services by:

- Creating a grants program to fund rape crisis centers so that they can deliver emotional support services behind bars, including telephone hotline services and crisis intervention services;
- Funding training for correctional agencies, facilities, and staff to help build expertise in providing emotional support services for incarcerated survivors; and
- Creating a national resource center to guide and support advocates and corrections officials alike on best practices for providing emotional support services for incarcerated survivors.

We respectfully urge you to move this legislation forward. We thank you for your continued leadership in ensuring the safety and dignity of people in custody.

Sincerely,

Advocates to End Domestic Violence  
American Civil Liberties Union  
Battered Women's Justice Project  
Beyond Survival  
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center  
Center for Criminal Justice Reform  
Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Consultants Improving Human Services and Corrections  
Correctional Association of New York  
Correctional Leaders Association  
DC Rape Crisis Center

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<sup>3</sup> National Standards, §§115.53, available at [www.federalregister.gov/d/2012-12427/p-1520](http://www.federalregister.gov/d/2012-12427/p-1520)

East Los Angeles Women's Center  
Equal Justice USA  
FAMM  
Fight4Justice  
Guam Division of Youth Affairs  
Highlands Church Denver  
Humanity for Prisoners  
Human Rights for Kids  
International Association of Forensic Nurses  
Just Detention International  
Justice First  
Justice Roundtable  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
Let's Get Free: The Women and Trans Prisoner Defense Committee  
Love More Movement  
Medical Justice Alliance  
Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Monsoon Asians and Pacific Islanders in Solidarity  
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence  
National Asian Pacific Initiative to End Sexual Violence  
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Commission on Correctional Health Care  
National Legal Aid and Defender Association  
National PREA Coordinator Working Group  
New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision  
North American Association of Wardens and Superintendents  
North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Peace Over Violence  
Prison Policy Initiative  
Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault  
Rights4Girls  
Root & Rebound  
Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition  
StoptheDrugWar.org  
Southern Center for Human Rights  
Texas Association Against Sexual Assault  
ValorUS  
Victim Rights Law Center  
WestCOP-Victim Assistance Services  
Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
A Window Between Worlds  
WOAR-Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence

