Time to Move Beyond Statistics - [Your name and, if applicable, title and organization]

The statistics are staggering. On average, four to five people are murdered by their intimate partners each day in America. Several hundred people are raped or sexually assaulted daily. But violence is more than statistics. Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking (“the four crimes”) touch every one of us. They fill emergency rooms and morgues, keeps employees from being able to work, terrorize children, and interfere with their ability to learn. They drives up health care costs, contribute to crime on our streets, and cause lasting harm to families and communities.

It’s time – way past time – to do much more to stop this violence, and to protect our communities. That means investing in prevention. That means increasing access to justice and safety for Native women. That means holding perpetrators accountable rather than punishing victims and improving enforcement of protective orders. That means ensuring victims and survivors have safe housing and economic stability. That means reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act with modest but meaningful improvements that enhance our nation’s response to these heinous crimes. That means moving forward - never backwards and never remaining static.

Domestic and dating violence, rape and sexual assault, and stalking are pervasive problems in our society. No community is unaffected. They affect us all - they are all of our business. Recognizing this, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994 to improve the nation’s response to the four crimes. It has been reauthorized three times since then, in 2000, 2005, and 2013; each reauthorization made vital improvements to previous law.

[*OPTIONAL - direct service provider/advocate explain the services your organization provides; individuals explain why you are passionate about VAWA*]

The time is upon us to reauthorize VAWA again, and this reauthorization, too, must be responsive to the needs of victims and survivors. Representative Sheila Jackson Lee (Texas-18) has introduced H.R.6545, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2018. This bill, based on extensive consultation with victim service providers, law enforcement, and other experts, preserves previous gains and improves current law to better meet the needs of victims and survivors of domestic violence. It invests in prevention. It increases access to justice and safety for Native women. It protects victims and survivors and helps them rebuild their lives.

The current VAWA authorization expires on September 30. Now more than ever, we need Congress to make it a priority to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act with the modest enhancements encapsulated in H.R.6545 – essential legislation that funds victim services, prevention programs and other critically needed community services. Stopping domestic and sexual violence and protecting victims must be a priority in our city, our state and our country. There’s no time to waste. Congress should reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act and provide appropriate funding for the programs it supports.