

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 9, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

As you take office, we urge you to create a position of Special Advisor on Sexual Violence at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Staffing this role with an experienced advocate for sexual assault survivors reporting directly to the Secretary would be an unprecedented and important step for coordinating and strengthening how the federal government responds to sexual violence and supports survivors. It would make clear to the nation that we must act upon a painful reality: that sexual violence in America has become a public health crisis.

In their December 17th letter to you, the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV) and coalitions of advocates and stakeholders from across the country emphasized the value of creating such a position at HHS. The estimated lifetime cost of rape is \$122,461 for each survivor, to say nothing of the lives scarred and sometimes destroyed. Conditions including depression, post-traumatic stress, joint conditions, cervical cancer, sexually transmitted diseases, and heart disease are all more likely when a person has experienced sexual violence. Additionally, sexual violence can contribute to substance use and other health crises HHS has worked to address as part of its mission. Establishing a special advisor focused on these concerns would provide a critical launching pad for HHS to develop new and innovative strategies to combat sexual violence from a health perspective.

There is so much more we can do to ensure survivors can safely and affordably access not only physical care, but also the mental health care they need in order to begin to heal from the trauma of sexual violence. With 21% of women and 3% of men reporting being the victim of rape or attempted rape, in many cases while still a minor, enhanced governmental action is urgent.

As the Family and Youth Bureau, the Office on Trafficking, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Rape Prevention & Education Program (RPE) and other components of HHS continue to tackle sexual violence, we firmly believe that establishing a special advisor role within the Office of the Secretary to elevate and coordinate HHS's work in this space, both interdepartmentally and through liaising with other government agencies and Congress, will result in greater expertise at HHS, more substantive policy, and translate to improved health outcomes for survivors of sexual violence.

We appreciate your attention to this matter as you prepare to begin a new administration, and we stand ready to work with you to develop this position and ensure it has the congressional support needed to be successful and effective.

Sincerely,



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



David P. Joyce
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



John Katko
Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
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Rodney Davis
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Frank J. Mrvan
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Raúl M. Grijalva
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Alan Lowenthal
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Katie Porter
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Don Bacon
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Ron Kind
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Mark Amodei
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Jennifer Wexton
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Sheila Jackson Lee
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Nanette Diaz Barragán
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Anthony Gonzalez
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Ro Khanna
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Paul Tonko
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Mark Pocan
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Mondaire Jones
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Marcy Kaptur
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David E. Price
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Jason Crow
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Judy Chu
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Barbara Lee
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Michael F.Q. San Nicolas
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