



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

February 11, 2021

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Burr, Ranking Member Crapo, and Committee Members:

The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV) is the voice in Washington, DC for the 56 state and territorial sexual assault coalitions and over 1500 local programs working to end sexual violence and support survivors. The local programs we serve see the widespread and devastating consequences of sexual violence for survivors every day. On their behalf, I write to urge you to confirm the appointment of Xavier Becerra as Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS).

According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey:

- 21% of women and 3% of men reported completed or attempted rape ever in their lifetime.
- Among victims of rape, 43% (11 million) of females and 51% (1.5 million) of males reported it occurred for the first time between the ages of 11-17.ⁱ

The estimated lifetime cost of rape is \$122,461 per survivor, or a population-based economic burden of nearly \$3.1 trillion (2014 U.S. dollars) over survivors' lifetimes. This estimate included \$1.2 trillion (39%) in medical costs; and \$1.6 trillion (52%) in lost work productivity among survivors and perpetrators.ⁱⁱ

The short- and long-term effects of sexual violence can undermine a person's physical and mental health. Based on an analysis of studies from 1980-2008, survivors of sexual violence have a significantly higher prevalence of anxiety, depression, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide attempts.ⁱⁱⁱ According to the 2005 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, survivors of sexual violence are more likely to suffer from asthma and joint conditions. Studies have also found an increased risk of cervical cancer and sexually transmitted diseases.^{iv}

www.EndSexualViolence.org 

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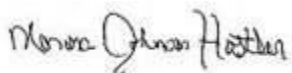
1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, FL 10, Washington, DC 20009 

Many survivors encounter the problems of homelessness, substance use disorders, mental health problems, trafficking experiences, and chronic health conditions. The issue of sexual violence cuts across many HHS bureaus, programs, and offices: programs in the Family and Youth Bureau including Family Violence Prevention Services (FVPSA), Homeless & Runaway Youth, and Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention; the Office on Trafficking in Persons; the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; and the CDC where the Rape Prevention & Education Program (RPE) is housed.

Xavier Becerra is a demonstrated leader who brings decades of health policy experience addressing violence against women and support services, ensuring access to healthcare, and protecting Social Security and Medicare. His long history of defending and protecting the Affordable Care Act has provided essential health care access and coverage for many previously uninsured people, including those experiencing sexual violence and trauma. His commitment to gender equity and women's health, and specifically reproductive health, positions him well to develop and promote policies that will positively impact survivors of sexual violence and further the administration's commitment to ending gender-based violence. As District Attorney of California, he joined with Attorneys General across the country in 2018 and 2020 to advocate for the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women act, including provisions strengthen protections for the most marginalized and vulnerable members of our communities. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, he prioritized the needs of survivors experiencing even greater isolation to ensure they had access to critical services in California.

For the past decade, our nation has experienced a deep reckoning with the devastating depth and breadth of the problem of sexual violence. Under the leadership of Xavier Becerra, HHS can reach farther in meeting the needs of survivors and preventing sexual violence. His legal background and efforts with his expansive understanding of health and welfare issues is the perfect mix of experience to meet the needs of an agency that affects all members of our communities.

Sincerely,



Monika Johnson Hostler
President

i <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/2015data-brief508.pdf>

ii [http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(16\)30615-8/abstract](http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(16)30615-8/abstract)

iii Ibid

iv Ibid