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February 12, 2021

United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
United States Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) writes to you to urge you to confirm California Attorney General Xavier Becerra (Becerra) to be the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). NCADV is the nation's oldest national grassroots domestic violence organization, representing domestic violence programs and survivors directly. Established in 1978, mission is to lead, mobilize and raise our voices to support efforts that demand a change of conditions that lead to domestic violence such as patriarchy, privilege, racism, sexism, and classism. We are dedicated to supporting survivors and holding offenders accountable and supporting advocates.

NCADV envisions a national culture in which we are all safe, empowered and free from domestic violence, and Becerra's record proves that he will promote such a culture as Secretary of HHS. Domestic violence impacts every person in America. With one in four women and one in ten men experiencing intimate partner violence,¹ everyone is acquainted with someone who has experienced violence – whether they know it or not. Black and Native women experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence,² and they systems that ought to protect them are often actively hostile. White supremacy is a feature of all of these systems. Women who are financially unstable, and who may rely on government assistance such as that overseen by HHS, are also particularly vulnerable to intimate partner violence – or are financially unstable as a result of the violence they experienced.

Programs within HHS are a literal lifeline for countless survivors. The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) is the only dedicated funding source for domestic

¹ Smith, S.G., Zhang, X., Basile, K.C., Merrick, M.T., Wang, J., Kresnow, M. & Chen, J. (2018). *The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey: 2015 data brief - updated release*. Atlanta: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/2015data-brief508.pdf>.

² Smith, S.G., Chen, J., Basile, K.C., Gilbert, L.K., Merrick, M.T., Patel, N., Walling, M., & Jain, A. (2017). *The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 state report*. Atlanta: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS-StateReportBook.pdf>.

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violence programs and is housed in HHS. Survivors rely on a host of other HHS programs, including programs that are necessary for them to rebuild their financial stability after leaving an abusive relationship such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and childcare assistance. HHS programs are integral to the health and wellbeing of survivors. With experience both as a legislator in the United States House of Representatives and as an executive as the Attorney General of California, Becerra is uniquely qualified to lead the agency.

Intimate partner violence is nothing short of a public health crisis, and the domestic violence epidemic is only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as survivors face added barriers to leaving abusive relationships, including the potential of losing healthcare coverage. Becerra has a proven record of fighting for access to healthcare for all Americans. This includes leading the legal campaign to prevent the Affordable Care Act from being dismantled, thereby protecting millions of survivors' access to healthcare.

In both elected and appointed positions, he has been a champion for women and for lower-income families. In 2020, he said, "There is no place for violence against women anywhere."³ We agree with him, and we know that he will continue to be a champion for survivors as Secretary.

Thus, we urge the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and the Senate Committee on Finance to expeditiously confirm Attorney General Becerra to be the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Sincerely,

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

³ State of California Department of Justice (2020, May 4). *Attorney General Becerra urges Congress to renew protections under the Violence Against Women Act* [Press release]. <https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-becerra-urges-congress-renew-protections-under-violence-against>.