

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman, Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Shelby, and Vice Chairman Leahy:

We write today to urge you to provide additional funding to support shelter and transitional housing services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault as you work to develop a CARES 2.0 package. We request this funding include an additional \$4 million for the Department of Justice Emergency and Transitional Pet Shelter and Housing Assistance (ETPSHA) grant program authorized by the Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act.

Reports of domestic violence have risen dramatically across the country in recent weeks as stay-at-home orders subject many victims of family abuse to prolonged periods of isolation with their abuser. The presence of new stressors, such as COVID-19-related job losses, have increased the likelihood of domestic violence incidents. Research has also shown that the challenge of leaving an abusive relationship is compounded by the presence of a family pet. Abusers frequently threaten or harm pets as a means to exert power and control. Approximately 50 percent of domestic violence survivors cite the fear of leaving their pets behind with their abuser as a reason for why they remain in abusive situations. Yet despite the prevalence of this problem, most shelters in the United States do not admit companion animals, and this lack of capacity often forces victims to remain in abusive situations out of fear of leaving their companion animals behind.

Recognizing the importance of addressing this problem, Congress incorporated the PAWS Act into the 2018 Farm Bill, creating a grant program to help domestic violence shelters accommodate survivors with pets. While the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime is currently working to get FY20 funding into the hands of shelters, that initial allocation did not anticipate the substantial increase in demand for these services. We in turn urge no less than \$4 million in additional investment for these ETPSHA grants as we look to the next phase in our efforts to support vulnerable populations while addressing and recovering from this crisis.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you to provide for the immediate, increased needs of domestic violence survivors in CARES 2.0.

Sincerely,

/s/ Gary C. Peters

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Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker

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Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

/s/ Kyrsten Sinema

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Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey

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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

/s/ Robert Menendez

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Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher A. Coons

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Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.

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Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein

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Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

/s/ Martha McSally

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Martha McSally  
United States Senator

/s/ Susan M. Collins

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Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand

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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal

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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen

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Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

/s/ Tom Udall

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Tom Udall  
United States Senator

/s/ Brian Schatz

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Brian Schatz  
United States Senator

/s/ Thomas R. Carper

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Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith

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Tina Smith  
United States Senator

/s/ Catherine Cortez Masto

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Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator

/s/ Kamala D. Harris

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Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Baldwin

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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine

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Tim Kaine  
United States Senator

/s/ Maria Cantwell

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Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

/s/ Martin Heinrich

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Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown

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Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

/s/ Richard J. Durbin

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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren

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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

/s/ Jacky Rosen

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Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden

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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth

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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

/s/ Jack Reed

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Jack Reed  
United States Senator

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley

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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar

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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator