

Prevention Measures Will Train Healthcare Providers to Recognize Victims of Violence, and Will Reduce up to \$8.3B in Annual Health Care Costs

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter, Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today announced that she has introduced the Violence Against Women Health Initiative Act, which will strengthen the ability of health care providers to identify victims of violence and help women from being victimized again.

“Domestic and sexual violence is all too common in the United States. Nearly one in four women report experiencing violence in their life which is a tragedy,” said Slaughter. “This legislation is specifically designed to help healthcare providers recognize victims of violence and take action to prevent these women from being harmed again.”

While no sector of society is left untouched by intimate partner violence, the health care system is particularly impacted by domestic violence.

More than twenty years of research connects child and adult exposure to domestic violence to asthma, stroke, heart disease, stroke, cancer, and depression. Intimate partner violence costs the health care system over \$8.3 billion annually.

Victims of domestic violence know and trust their health care providers. Almost three-quarters of survivors of domestic violence say that they would like their health care providers to ask them about intimate partner violence.

“The health care system is uniquely positioned to take a leading role in fighting and responding to intimate partner violence,” said Slaughter. “By training our future doctors, nurses and other health care professionals to recognize and help us prevent future domestic attacks, we will be able to save some of the \$8.3 billion domestic violence costs our health care system each year. Most importantly we can save women from repeated attacks.”

Routine assessment for intimate partner violence has been recommended for health care settings by the American Medical Association, American Psychological Association, American Nurses Association, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations.

“I would like to thank Representative Slaughter for introducing this critically important bill to continue the progress the United States has made to stop domestic and sexual violence in the public health system,” said Family Violence Prevention Fund President Esta Soler. “Health care providers are in a unique position to assess patients who may experience violence, respond to it and prevent more serious abuse. This legislation can help stop domestic and sexual violence and help victims.”

Catherine Cerulli, who studies domestic violence in her role at the University of Rochester said, “Intimate partner violence is a significant health problem confronting this nation. Thanks to the leadership of Congresswoman Slaughter, the Violence Against Women Health Initiative will help educate healthcare providers on how to prevent, assess, screen, diagnose, treat, and refer victims of domestic and sexual violence while reducing health care costs.”

The Violence Against Women Health Initiative Act, [H.R. 1587](#) , serves as the first step in reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act which Slaughter [co-authored](#)

and was signed into law in 1994. The landmark legislation was reauthorized in 2000 and 2005 and will expire later this year. Since its passage, the Violence Against Women Act has transformed our criminal justice and social service system, helping to prevent and respond to domestic violence effectively. Between 1993 and 2008, the rate of intimate partner violence dropped 53 percent.

Slaughter’s legislation would specifically reauthorize three health programs; changes in the legislation will prioritize evaluation and accountability, as well as to expand the types of medical stakeholders engaged in this important effort.

The Vitals

Domestic Violence is All Too Prevalent

- Every nine seconds, a woman is abused in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control, women experience two million injuries due to intimate partner violence in a year. According to 2009 statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigations, of the 1,928 women murdered, 609 were wives murdered by their husbands; and 472 were girlfriends murdered by their significant other.

- Nearly one-third of women in the United States report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend some time in their lives.

- In this period of elevated unemployment rates, there is particular cause for concern. The rate of violence in a relationship nearly doubles when a man is unemployed at least once. The rate of violence almost triples when a man experiences multiple periods of unemployment.

And It Has A Major Effect On National Health Care Costs

- Day to day, women who have been abused utilize the health system at much higher rates. Victims of violence have 17 percent more primary care visits and 14 percent more specialist visits than women who have not been abused. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that intimate partner violence costs the health care system over \$8.3 billion annually.· Despite these facts, a critical gap remains in the delivery of health care to victims, with many providers discharging a woman with only the presenting injuries being treated, leaving the underlying cause of those injuries not addressed. Universal

screening for intimate partner violence has been recommended for health care settings by the American Medical Association, American Nurses Association, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Psychological Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations.

For more on Slaughter's work regarding the Violence Against Women Act, [click here.](#)