



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN, INC.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS:

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May 7, 2012

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
2138 Rayburn
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Conyers
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
B-351 Rayburn
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Conyers:

The National Council of Negro Women, the nation's oldest historic civil rights organization dedicated to the advancement of both civil rights and women's rights, speaks out on behalf of the over 4 million women whose lives we touch in strong opposition to H.R. 4970, the Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

It is deeply disturbing that after nearly two decades of continuous advancements, particularly in the comprehensive approach VAWA 2005 took to ensure resources and services for culturally specific communities, that we now see before you a bill that represents a giant step back.

We are deeply concerned that H.R. 4970 will result in significantly reduced access to safe-houses/shelters for victims across this country and in the U.S Territories. HR 4970 will disproportionately harm Black women and other women of color who also live through the horror of domestic violence or sexual violence. This is quite simply, unacceptable.

We cannot stand by silently while the suffering of our Native American sisters would be deemed unworthy of criminal prosecution if her batterer happens to live beyond Tribal lands. Neither can we ignore the fact that immigrant women would be subject to further abuse if their location cannot be kept confidential, resulting in the likelihood that their batterers would find them and potentially abuse them again. Likewise, we cannot ignore the unvarnished truth that abuse is abuse in spite of the sex of the abuser and whether or not that abuse takes place within the boundaries of a same-sex relationship. And finally, we recognize the critical importance of ensuring the delivery of culturally specific programming so that victims are able to receive services within a context that best resonates with their lives and cultural experience.

Founder: Mary McLeod Bethune

President Emerita: Dorothy I. Height

Chair: Dr. Barbara L. Shaw

Executive Director: Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever

Affiliated with: National Council of Women of the United States
International Council of Women/National Assumbly for Social Policy & Development
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For us, at NCNW, the aforementioned issues are non-negotiable. We strongly urge your opposition to H.R. 4970 in favor of a version of H.R. 4271 that includes provisions that were present in the bi-partisan Senate bill which provided protections for tribal victims, immigrant victims, LGBTQ victims and other marginalized communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective on this issue. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this issue further, please feel free to contact me directly at 202-383-9133.

Sincerely,



Avis Jones-DeWeever, Ph.D.
Executive Director
National Council of Negro Women, Inc.

cc: House Judiciary Committee Members