

20 March, 2013

Loretta Sanchez  
1114 Longworth House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Sanchez:

I strongly believe in the principles upon which our government is founded, and one of these fundamental principles is the belief that our government was instituted to uphold and protect the rights of its citizens. A person's unalienable rights, as mentioned by Jefferson, to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, are violated when they become victim to sexual violence, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking. Therefore, I believe that the Federal Government can and should be more proactive about sexual violence on college campuses: both in helping those who have become victim to this terrible crime and by implementing laws that help prevent it. You, Representative Sanchez, can help advocate for the victims who are too timid to come forth by helping pass the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act when it comes through the House of Representatives.

In a 2005 National Institute of Justice publication, researchers found that of violent crimes, sexual assault is the most underreported – a fact that still holds true today because nothing has been done to change the attitudes of the victims of these crimes. In an article on rape and sexual assault from the Medical University of South Carolina, the horrifying truth is revealed: only between 14%-32% of rapes are reported to the police nation-wide. This does not take into account that on college campuses rapes are even more likely to go unreported, with less than 5% of experiences recounted in some cases. Victims of sexual assault are often too afraid to come forward because they believe they will be ostracized from their communities, that they may be partially to blame (alcohol often plays a role in the abuse), they fear not knowing what will happen at each step in the process of reporting such a crime, or they think that there will not be enough evidence to convict the perpetrator. The Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act will help to clearly outline the steps to take if an individual becomes a victim of sexual violence, their rights, and what will happen during each step of the process. Just as the Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989 protects the individuals who report federal misconduct against retaliation and streamlines the process, so the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act will protect the rights of the victims and make the appeals process more accessible to an already-vulnerable individual.

As stated by Assembly Bill 1088, California Community Colleges and California State Universities are required to help students who have become victims of sexual violence and are required to have information online about steps to take when sexual violence occurs. Despite this bill, college students remain unaware of what steps to take if such a situation were to arise. I recently went to the Health Center on my campus and asked for information regarding sexual assault and violence. The women there were ready to help and had some informative brochures on people to contact. I can conclude that yes, the information is there and readily available, but only if a student seeks it out. College campuses are not doing enough to actively disseminate

preventative information about the subject and information on school policies regarding sexual violence. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is a comprehensive program that was applied at different levels of education to raise awareness of bullying, help prevent it, and improve peer relations. Since applying the program, schools from California, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and other states have seen a noticeable decline in the number of students being bullied. We need such a program as this, that can be implemented at an institution of higher education, that will help make students more aware of the prevalent problem of sexual violence. If more students became cognizant of the process, sexual violence would most likely decrease. The Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act will make this education a requirement.

As you read this, please consider the millions of citizens who have fallen prey to sexual violence in the past and the many more that will fall victim in the future. If the U.S. Federal Government could only prevent a fraction of these crimes from occurring and could help even a small number of traumatized victims, it would be fulfilling its job as chief protector of the rights of the citizens that live in the United States of America.

Sincerely,

*Handwritten Signature*

Print Name