May 27, 2020

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

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

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senators Shelby, Leahy, Moran, and Shaheen:

The 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has caused untold pain and suffering to the American people. While it now appears that we are past the peak of infections from this disease, there is another affliction which also requires our attention. The imposition of stay-at-home orders has heightened the risk of domestic violence for many in North Carolina. These stay-at-home orders provide abusers with greater ability to control their victims and to inflict both emotional and physical harm.

The increased number of calls received by law enforcement and by domestic violence shelters bears out the increased need for victims services in light of COVID-19 and stay-at-home orders. For example, in Asheville, North Carolina, Helpmate Domestic Violence Services has seen a forty-four percent increase in requests for shelter and a seventeen percent increase in calls to their domestic violence hotline. Similarly, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department reported an eighteen percent increase in domestic violence calls in March 2020. And in Wilmington, domestic violence shelters and services are experiencing an increased number of calls and demands for services, with one non-profit experiencing a one hundred and fourteen percent increase in calls alone.

These numbers are an example of the challenges being faced by domestic violence victims across North Carolina. Domestic violence knows no boundaries, and affects our largest and smallest communities alike. As the government continues to encourage its citizens to stay home in order to save lives, we must be mindful that home is not a safe place for all of our people.
In previous COVID-19 related legislation, Congress neglected to provide additional resources to combat domestic violence. Organizations serving domestic violence victims are facing reduced revenue from private donations and increased demand for services due to COVID-19. In light of these challenges, I urge you to ensure that adequate funding is provided in any future spending bills to address and combat domestic violence. Funding to fight domestic violence will save lives and livelihoods, and will help those in greatest need gain access to services when they need it most.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Senator Thom Tillis