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**Nationwide Coalition Files Lawsuit to Challenge Administration's Attempt to Withhold  
Violence Against Women Grants that Support Survivors**

*New Requirements Threaten Resources for Victims of Violence*

**Rhode Island** - A nationwide group of 17 state sexual assault and domestic violence coalitions today filed a new lawsuit seeking immediate relief to stop the Trump-Vance administration from imposing unlawful restrictions on grants issued by the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). New restrictions imposed on grant funding for domestic and sexual violence services make it impossible for many of the service providers to operate programs effectively, threatening to eliminate services that victims of violence rely on in neighborhoods throughout the country.

After taking office in January, President Trump issued a series of executive orders directing agency heads to impose conditions on federal funding, including to curtail diversity, equity, and inclusion programs that the administration deems "illegal" and "immoral" and efforts that recognize and respect people regardless of gender identity. The new harmful restrictions put grant recipients in impossible situations, asking them to certify that they comply with limitations on their ability to operate as Congress has required – specifically targeting vulnerable populations – or risk penalties under the False Claims Act.

The group of state domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions includes the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault, DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin: The Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Jane Doe Inc. (The Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence), Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Oregon Coalition Against

Domestic and Sexual Violence, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, ValorUS, Violence Free Minnesota, Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance, and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

The plaintiff coalition is represented in the matter by Democracy Forward, Jacobson Lawyers Group, Lynette Labinger for the ACLU Foundation of Rhode Island, National Women's Law Center, and DeLuca, Weizenbaum, Barry & Revens, Ltd. for the Lawyers' Committee for Rhode Island.

"The Trump administration now demands loyalty oaths to its destructive and discriminatory policies. We will not be complicit in our government's ongoing terror inflicted on survivors. Let's be clear, VALOR's loyalty lies with survivors and communities working to end sexual violence," said **Sandra Henriquez, CEO of ValorUS**.

"Instead of discriminating against survivors for their gender identity and immigration status, OVW grants should open the way to safety, healing and services for every one of the millions of Californians looking for help during the most dangerous and traumatic times of their lives", said **Krista Colón, Executive Director of the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence**. "With the need for services already far outpacing available resources, programs deserve funding that makes it easier to do their work, not harder. And yet, these grant conditions have stoked fear and uncertainty among advocates, who now run the risk of harsh penalties unless they promise to ignore survivors experiencing abuse. Domestic violence programs should never be threatened with a demand to limit who they serve or otherwise lose government funding. At the Partnership, we are committed to ensuring that healing services reach all survivors, especially those who shoulder daily discrimination."

"By forcing providers to choose between certifying compliance with unlawful conditions or giving up federal funding needed to help keep their communities safe, the Trump administration is holding funding hostage in an effort to force service providers to bend to the administration's anti-DEI, anti-immigrant, and anti-trans goals," said **Skye Perryman, President and CEO of Democracy Forward**, which is part of the legal team representing the coalition in the case. "This is unlawful and threatens important programs preventing domestic violence and sexual assault and supporting survivors."

Created as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was Congress's comprehensive response to the issue of violence against women, focusing primarily on legal protections, increased enforcement, access to legal structures and assistance, and expanded services for victims. VAWA has enhanced investigations

and prosecutions of sex offenses, funded a toll-free hotline for victims of domestic violence, offered financial incentives for states to focus on domestic violence as a serious crime, provided grants for colleges and universities to address violence against women on campus and emergency shelter and housing assistance for individuals fleeing violence, and included provisions on rape and battery that focused on prevention, funding for victim services, and a requirement that every state acknowledge and respect orders of protection issued anywhere in the United States.

In order to ensure a comprehensive approach to addressing violence against women, Congress created a broad set of grant programs for states, federally recognized state and territory domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions, service providers, and tribes. These programs focus on a broad range of activities, from preventing domestic violence and sexual assault to fostering collaboration between law enforcement and victim service providers to preventing crimes in national parks, among others. Congress has reauthorized and amended VAWA four times since its enactment, creating the OVW and directing it to award grants under specific criteria and limitations set by Congress.

The plaintiffs filed their complaint against the Department of Justice, Attorney General Pamela Bondi, the OVW, and the Office's acting director Ginger Baran Lyons, asking a federal court in the District of Rhode Island to stop the implementation of the unlawful conditions added by the DOJ.

To read the complaint, please select [here](#).

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