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STATEMENT ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

As the deadline to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act fast approaches, various reports indicate that VAWA will be extended through December 7th as part of the government funding bill. However, modest, yet critical improvements to the Act will likely not be a reality. This Congress will push through only a simple, short-term extension to VAWA without a meaningful and thoughtful approach to protecting survivors of violence.

“The Tahirih Justice Center is disappointed at the lack of reauthorization by Congress, putting women who endured horrific brutality in a vulnerable position without the vital support they need from the federal government,” said Archi Pyati, Chief of Policy at the Tahirih Justice Center. “Protecting survivors of violence should not be a partisan issue.”

Without robust enhancements to VAWA, immigrant women are especially susceptible as they navigate an already-complex and ever-changing immigration process. Three out of four advocates report that immigrant survivors have concerns about going to court for a matter related to their abuser. In the first two quarters of FY2018, there were 1,869 approvals and 1,067 denials of VAWA self-petitions; of the cases that were adjudicated, 36% were denied. Domestic battery problems can be terribly exacerbated in marriages where one spouse is not a citizen, and the non-citizen’s legal status depends on her marriage to her abuser.

“Immigrant survivors of violence are currently living in a climate of fear created by increased deportations and growing restrictions on protections for immigrants fleeing horrific violence,” added Pyati. “A battered spouse may be deterred from taking action to protect herself because of the threat or fear of deportation.”

Every five years, Congress has the opportunity and moral imperative to reauthorize VAWA and to achieve bipartisan support for protecting survivors of violence. Advocates have been working with Congressional leadership for nearly two years to design a bill with common sense improvements that would have made the Act clearer and more effective.

“The Tahirih Justice Center and our colleagues are prepared to continue to engage with Congress to achieve a reauthorization of VAWA over the coming months that we hope will put all victims of violence first,” said Pyati.

About the Tahirih Justice Center

The Tahirih Justice Center is the largest national direct service and policy advocacy organization focused on assisting immigrant women and girls fleeing violence. Tahirih will continue to monitor policy shifts that impact women and girls fleeing violence and advocate for the United States to honor its legal obligations to protect those fleeing human rights abuses.

*Tahirih Justice Center is a national non-profit that protects courageous immigrant women and girls who refuse to be victims of violence through free legal and social services, public policy advocacy, and training and education.
Visit www.tahirih.org for more information.*