

Michaud Leads Funding Fight in Congress for Services for Sexual Assault Survivors

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Tuesday, March 18 2008

AUGUSTA, ME - Today, Congressman Mike Michaud and his colleagues sent a letter urging the Appropriations Committee to support services for sexual assault survivors by increasing funding for the Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP), which was reauthorized in 2006 as a part of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

AUGUSTA, ME - Today, Congressman Mike Michaud and his colleagues sent a letter urging the Appropriations Committee to support services for sexual assault survivors by increasing funding for the Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP), which was reauthorized in 2006 as a part of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

"This program created a desperately needed federal funding stream for direct services, which will assure rape crisis centers have the resources to continue providing vital services to all victims of sexual violence," said Michaud. "We must properly fund the program, especially given the tight budget situations facing many of our states, including Maine."

The Sexual Assault Services Program not only provides funds for service providers, but it also makes available resources to state, territory and tribal sexual assault coalitions who work to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of local programs. While rape crisis centers and other organizations have made great progress towards ensuring that sexual assault victims receive the services they need, these agencies' ability to serve the needs of all victims of sexual violence - both female and male, young and old - has historically been hampered by a significant lack of resources.

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The Honorable Alan Mollohan and Rodney Frelinghuysen

Chairman and Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

H-310 Capitol Building

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Mollohan and Ranking Member Frelinghuysen:

As you know the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was reauthorized and signed into law by President Bush on January 5, 2006. VAWA 2005 reauthorized lifesaving programs that have been at the core of our community's response to domestic and sexual violence for over a decade. It also expanded these programs to include victims of sexual assault by authorizing the Sexual Assault Service Program (SASP) which creates a desperately needed federal funding stream for direct services, which will assure rape crisis centers have the necessary funds to continue providing vital services to all victims of sexual violence. We write to request your support for implementing the goals of SASP by increasing funding this program which Congress funded for the first time in Fiscal Year 2008.

According to the 2006 National Violence Against Women Survey, 1 of every 6 women has been raped in her lifetime, and 1 of every 33 men. While rape crisis centers and other organizations have made tremendous progress towards ensuring that sexual assault victims receive the services they need, these agencies' ability to serve the needs of all victims of sexual violence - both female and male, young and old - has historically been hampered by a significant lack of resources. And now, more victims of sexual assault are coming forward for help than ever before.

The Sexual Assault Services Program not only provides funds for service providers, but it also makes available resources to state, territory and tribal sexual assault coalitions who work to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of local programs. Funding is also directed to Native American tribes as well as culturally-specific organizations to better reach and serve victims in communities that have been historically underserved.

We do appreciate the difficult budget situation that faces Congress this year; however, more than 700 women and girls are raped or sexually assaulted each day, and young people ages 16-24 are raped and sexually assaulted at rates higher than any other age group. We sincerely hope that you will support increasing funding for the Sexual Assault Services Program for FY 2009 so these victims can receive the services and support they need as they navigate the medical, criminal justice and social support systems.

Sincerely,