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| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** Michawn Rich 202-224-6244 |
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**Heller Testifies on His Bill to Combat Sexual Assault on College Campuses** **(Washington, DC)**– Today, U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) testified at the Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions Committee hearing titled, “Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act: Combating Campus Sexual Assault.” The hearing addressed the [*Campus Accountability and Safety Act*](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=4ef604b9-a20a-4f19-8c98-16a4bba9348c), which Senator Heller introduced alongside Senators Claire McCaskill (D-MO), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Marco Rubio (R-FL), and Mark Warner (D-VA). During Heller’s testimony, he emphasized the importance of their legislation to ensure all students working towards a college degree are able to focus on their studies without the threat of being sexually assaulted. Click [**HERE**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzhaIhnfQ1U) or on the video below to watch Senator Heller’s testimony. **Following the hearing, Senators Heller, McCaskill, Gillibrand, and Ayotte issued this joint statement:**“We have a responsibility to make sure colleges and universities keep our students safe, and must act on the failure to properly address campus sexual assault. Thanks to the survivors who have come forward and to a growing body of research, we know sexual assaults happen on campuses large and small, urban and rural, private and public. We also know that the lack of uniform standards for filing reports or initiating investigations has contributed to cases being swept under the rug at the expense of the entire campus community. We have worked with survivors, advocates, parents, schools and law enforcement to craft the bipartisan *Campus Accountability and Safety Act*and finally fix this broken system. Our comprehensive bill will make sure colleges are held accountable, creates new tools to measure campus safety and, requires schools to designate a trained Confidential Advisor to assist students.“Passing the Campus Accountability and Safety Act is critical to ensuring these cases will no longer be ignored, brushed aside, and mishandled. We are grateful to Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray for convening this important hearing and hope that our testimonies shed light not just on the problem of campus sexual assault but also on the solution.”**Senator Heller’s testimony as prepared:**Chairman Collins, Ranking Member Murray, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Campus Accountability and Safety Act.  I am grateful for the committee’s attention to the important issue of combating sexual assault on our nation’s college and university campuses.  I am proud to have worked alongside Senators McCaskill, Gillibrand, Ayotte, Grassley, Blumenthal, Rubio, and Warner to introduce our legislation that will address the shortcomings of current law and ensure all students working towards a college degree are able to focus on their studies instead of worrying about the threat of being sexually assaulted. When we first started working on this legislation, it was important for me to sit down with stakeholders in Nevada to build a workable proposal.  This is why last June, I held a roundtable in Las Vegas to receive input from Title IX coordinators, police officers, and victim’s advocacy groups on ways to prevent sexual assault and assist student survivors.  I brought their ideas back to Washington and much of their feedback helped us craft our first bill.  And this is only one example of our outreach.Since the first introduction of our bill, our bipartisan working group continued to meet with stakeholders across the nation, including survivor groups, students, colleges and universities, law enforcement, and others who helped strengthen and improve our new bill that we introduced earlier this year.   From the beginning, we have also worked diligently with your committee to ensure our final bill incorporated comments from experts on our nation’s education system.  Our working group strongly believes we have put together a comprehensive product that will provide our schools with the tools they need to make our campuses safer.  I know for me, and for many parents, watching your children go off to college is one of the proudest moments in your life. But, parents want to be confident that their sons and daughters will be safe and have access to the resources they need from their schools. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.Today, there are over 100 colleges and universities under investigation for violations of Title IX in their handling of campus sexual violence.  And while we have all seen news story after news story about these tragic events, the reality is there are many more survivor stories that have not been heard. Sexual assault is a crime that more often than not goes unreported, which is one of the reasons why data provided by our nation’s institutions simply do not reflect the prevalence of this crime.  In fact, there are many colleges and universities that have reported zero incidences of sexual offenses to the federal government.  I strongly believe one of the most important provisions of our bill is the campus climate survey.  This survey will improve access to accurate, campus-level data by allowing students to anonymously share their experiences related to sexual assault. Under our bill, schools will give their students an anonymous, online survey to gauge the scope of sexual assault on campus and the effectiveness of current institutional policies on this issue. The Department of Education will be responsible for developing this survey, as well as picking up its cost. Schools just need to ensure an adequate, random, and representative sample of students take the survey. The survey results will be reported to Congress and published on the Department of Education’s website.  Because this survey will be standardized, the American public will be able to compare the campus climate of all schools.  As a father of four children, I wish I had access to this kind of information when my kids were preparing to attend college.  And, now as a grandfather of two, my hope is that when they grow up and go off to school, our nation’s campuses will be safer than ever before. The campus climate survey will be a useful, educational tool for both students and parents, as well as an invaluable resource for institutions to help create or enhance efforts to prevent sexual assault, assist survivors of this crime, and improve campus safety overall. This provision is just one example of how Congress can act today and make ending this crime a priority.  While Congress cannot legislate away sexual assault, and no bill is perfect, I believe the Campus Accountability and Safety Act is a step in the right direction towards combating this heinous crime and guaranteeing survivors have access to the resources they need and deserve. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.  I look forward to continuing our work together to address the issue of campus sexual assault as part of reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. ###http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_fb.png http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_tw.png http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_yt.png |