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**Expanded Bipartisan Coalition Introduces Legislation to Prevent Sexual Assaults on College and University Campuses, Protect Students & Create Real Accountability**

*Joined by survivors and advocates, bipartisan group of 10 Senators reintroduces strengthened version of*  Campus Safety and Accountability Act *with added input from* *survivors, students, colleges and universities, law enforcement, and advocates*

**WASHINGTON** – An expanded bipartisan coalition of 10 Senators – including two newly elected members – today introduced a strengthened version of the *Campus Accountability and Safety Act*. With added input from survivors, students, colleges and universities, law enforcement and advocates, the bill would flip the current incentives of a broken system to provide real accountability and transparency from higher education institutions. The legislation would professionalize the response to and reporting of sexual assaults that occur on campuses to better protect and empower students, while also protecting the rights of accused students.

The legislation was introduced Thursday by Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), Dean Heller (R-Nev.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Mark Warner (D-Va.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Shelly Moore Capito (R-W.V.) and Gary Peters (D-MI.). The lawmakers were joined by Annie Clark and Andrea Pino, survivors and founders of the organization End Rape on Campus, as well as Scott Berkowitz from the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN).

The legislation would secure landmark reforms for how colleges and universities address and report incidents of sexual assault that occur on their campuses. It incorporates feedback from key stakeholders to strengthen how student surveys are conducted and strengthens newly required training standards. The provisions safeguard both survivors and accused students. It extends the amount of time survivors have to file a case with the Department of Education, and sets new notification requirements for both survivors and accused students involved in the campus disciplinary process.

Key provisions of the legislation include:

* Establishes New Campus Resources and Support Services for Student Survivors: Colleges and universities will be required to designate Confidential Advisors to assist survivors of sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. Confidential Advisors will coordinate support services and accommodations for survivors, provide information about options for reporting, and provide guidance or assistance—at the direction of the survivor—in reporting the crime to campus authorities and/or local law enforcement. Schools will no longer be allowed to sanction students who report sexual violence but reveal a non-violent student conduct violation in good faith, like underage drinking.

* Requires Fairness in Campus Disciplinary Process: All schools will now be required to use one uniform process for campus student disciplinary proceedings and may no longer allow athletic departments or other subgroups to handle complaints. Schools must now provide written notification to the accused as well as the victim of any decision to move forward with a campus disciplinary proceeding within 24 hours of that decision. The notice must include details of complaint, a summary of the disciplinary proceeding and the rights and due process protections available to both parties.

* Ensures Minimum Training Standards for On-Campus Personnel: This legislation ensures that everyone from the Confidential Advisors to those responsible for investigating and participating in disciplinary proceedings will receive specialized training so that they have a firm understanding of the nature of these crimes and their effect on survivors.

* Creates New Transparency Requirements: For the first time, students at every university in America will be surveyed about their experience with sexual violence to get an accurate picture of this problem.  This new biannual survey will be standardized and anonymous, with the results published online so that parents and high school students can make an informed choice when comparing universities. The Department of Education will also be required to publish the names of all schools with pending investigations, final resolutions, and voluntary resolution agreements related to Title IX with respect to sexual violence.

* Campus Accountability and Coordination with Law Enforcement: This legislation will require colleges and universities to enter into memoranda of understanding with each local law enforcement agency that has jurisdiction to report to a campus as a first responder to clearly delineate responsibilities and share information so that when a crime occurs, both campus authorities and local authorities can focus on solving the crime rather than debating jurisdiction.

* Enforceable Title IX Penalties and Stiffer Penalties for Clery Act Violations: Schools that do not comply with certain requirements under the bill may face a penalty of up to 1 percent of the institution’s operating budget. Previously, the only allowable penalty was the loss of all federal student aid which is not practical and has never been done.  The bill increases penalties for Clery Act violations to up to $150,000 per violation from the current penalty of $35,000. Financial penalties collected from universities in violation will be distributed back to campuses through a new competitive grant program, administrated by the Secretary of Education, for which colleges and universities can apply for the purpose of researching best practices for preventing and responding to sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking on college campuses and sharing such research with peer institutions and the Department of Education.

“This strengthened, bipartisan bill is a reflection of the valuable input we heard from survivors, advocates, and universities, whose feedback has turned this legislation into smarter policy,” **said Senator McCaskill.** “To truly curb these crimes, we’ve got to have a road map for colleges and universities to increase responsiveness when crimes occur, better protect and empower students, and establish better informed guidelines that actually have some teeth. That’s what this legislation aims to accomplish, and I’m confident we can get it passed.”

“As the father of two young women, one of whom is in college, I am proud to reintroduce the Campus Accountability and Safety Act with my colleagues today. Students throughout this country should be able to focus on studying for exams or spending time finding an internship, not worrying about their safety during their college experience,” **said Senator Heller**. “After receiving feedback from survivors, schools, advocacy groups, and law enforcement, we strengthened this legislation to ensure that schools have the tools to address the needs of survivors of sexual assault, as well as enhance strategies to make campuses safer for all students.  Combating sexual assault is an issue I am committed to. I will continue working with stakeholders on this issue and my Senate colleagues to move this important legislation forward.”

“Our bipartisan coalition is rightly and remarkably stronger than ever in seeking to stop the staggeringly prevalent scourge of campus sexual assaults,” **said Senator Blumenthal.**  “Our goal is to set a new standard of conduct and culture of safety. This legislation provides specific, enforceable rights – confidential protection and advice for survivors, a fair and professional internal disciplinary process and clear access to criminal justice, forceful accountability for schools and meaningful data collection. College administrators can no longer dismiss, demean, or deny the problem. Even after some progress by some schools, sexual assaults are all too often undeterred and underreported. Research shows that the vast majority of rapes on campus are committed by a small fraction of students, but all must be engaged and encouraged to intervene and act. New to this bill is a grant program to provide funding for best practices and campus prevention programs and victim services, proven successful at Connecticut College. The message is clear: the days of blaming the victim are over. The sooner we pass this measure, the sooner the President can sign it, and students can feel safer as they pursue new abilities and ambitions.”

“Our bill has provisions to ensure that colleges treat sexual assault cases with the seriousness they deserve,” **said Senator Grassley.** “This includes better coordination with law enforcement and clearer expectations for how colleges should handle reports of sexual assault.  Sexual assault is not some mere code of conduct violation.  It is a major criminal offense.  Like with any crime, weak enforcement makes the problem worse.  This bill will start to turn that around.”

“Right now, some colleges and universities are more inclined to expel a student for cheating on an exam than for committing sexual assault,” **said Senator Gillibrand.** “We know this problem is pervasive and too often swept under the rug by institutions that fail students. This bipartisan bill is a new path forward to protect students by flipping the incentives and holding schools accountable. I am grateful to the survivors and advocates whose work inspired this legislation, and who are helping us break through the partisan divide to change the status quo. Our work isn’t done, and I know everyone here will keep fighting to pass this bill to make our colleges safer and more transparent.”

“We must stop sexual violence on college campuses, and in order to do that, we need accountability, transparency and uniformity of standards. This bipartisan legislation includes much needed, historic reforms that will ensure greater coordination between schools and local law enforcement officials, with the goal of making college campuses safer and ensuring that survivors receive the support they need and deserve,” **said Senator Ayotte.** “Our daughters and sons deserve a safe campus environment and survivors need to know that they are not alone.  This is legislation that has teeth with real consequences for schools that fail to protect their students and it represents an important first step in addressing the threat of sexual violence at campuses in New Hampshire and across the country.”

“It’s time we empower students and end this culture that has fostered this epidemic. Our legislation does just that, by encouraging prevention and demanding more transparency, consistency and accountability from universities nationwide,” **said Senator Warner.** “As the father of three college-age daughters, I am heartbroken and appalled by the stories we’ve heard about the prevalence of campus assault and the uneven way many universities have chosen to respond to it. It’s time to put a stop to this epidemic once and for all.”

“Combatting sexual assaults on college campuses is fundamental to the goal of ensuring that all Americans have access to higher education in the 21st century,” **said Senator Rubio.** “Too many lives are ruined by a failure to deal with campus sexual assault crimes efficiently, fairly and consistently. By requiring more information to be made available to students and parents, stronger partnerships between schools and law enforcement, and more tools to help victims achieve justice and begin healing, I believe this legislation will turn the tide against campus sexual assault.”

“As the father of two teenage daughters, I’m proud to join with my colleagues on a bipartisan basis to tackle the serious problem of sexual assault on college campuses,” **said Senator Peters.** “This bill is a major step towards creating an environment where all students can feel safe and secure while receiving a higher education by bringing more accountability and transparency to reporting sexual assault on campuses.”

“The need for congressional action is clear. No student on a college campus should live in fear of being attacked or feel as though they cannot report sexual assault incidents,” **said Senator Moore Capito.** “I am proud to join this bipartisan coalition and take clear steps to help those in West Virginia and around the country affected by sexual assault, to educate campus personnel to respond compassionately and to strengthen the law enforcement response.”

Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, colleges and universities have a legal obligation to provide an environment that is free from discrimination on the basis of sex in all education programs and activities. Sexual harassment, which includes sexual violence, is a form of sex discrimination prohibited under Title IX.

The Senators have been working together for months to examine federal, state, and local policies, collect feedback from stakeholders, and craft updated bipartisan legislation to better protect and empower students, and hold both perpetrators and institutions accountable.

“The CASAct will be the first step towards revolutionizing how sexual assault is addressed on campuses,” said **Annie Clark and Andrea Pino, founders of End Rape on Campus**. “It’s time that we no longer give universities opportunities to ask for forgiveness, but rather increase the consequences for their long standing, systemic cover-up of this epidemic.”

“SAFER is proud to support the Campus Accountability and Safety Act,” said **Tracey E. Vitchers, Chair of the Board of Students Active for Ending Rape (SAFER)**. “We believe the legislation is an important step forward in the effort to make college campuses safer for all students and supportive of survivors of campus sexual violence."

“We’re grateful that so many Senate leaders are working hard, in a bipartisan way, to solve the problem of rape on campus,” said **Scott Berkowitz, RAINN Founder and President**. “The Campus Accountability and Safety Act will help improve the way that colleges deal with sexual violence, and will give more victims an opportunity for justice. It will also help us measure progress, through a bi-annual survey, and will stop the practice of letting athletic departments investigate allegations against their own players. By passing this bill to help fix the way colleges deal with sexual assault, and increasing the number of prosecutions so we take more rapists off the streets, we can make students safer. We owe it to them to pass this bill as soon as possible.”

“Confronting sexual assault on campus is a goal we should all embrace, and I am grateful that so many students, administrators, faculty, staff, unions, advocacy groups and law enforcement agencies have stepped up,” said **American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten.** “Changing campus policy and implementing those policies faithfully will also help, as will holding institutions accountable through legislation, like the bill Senator Gillibrand has introduced.”

“As SUNY adopts a uniform sexual assault policy across the university system, we feel strongly that ours can be an example for the nation, and I commend Senator Gillibrand for her continued leadership on this issue in Washington,” said **State University of New York Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher**. “The Senator’s bill represents a critical step forward as we aim to ensure safe learning environments on college campuses across the country.”

“Girls Inc. is proud to support CASA,” **said Judy Vredenburgh, President and CEO, Girls Inc**. “This bill is a significant step towards preventing sexual assault on campus and providing victims with the services and respect that they deserve. Girls Inc. applauds Senator Gillibrand and her colleagues for championing this critical cause.”

“Sexual Health Innovations is proud to support the Campus Accountability and Safety Act,” said **Jessica Ladd, Founder and Executive Director of Sexual Health Innovations**. “As a nonprofit organization dedicated to centering the needs of survivors in the creation of our sexual violence prevention and intervention technologies, we are encouraged by Senator Gillbrand's commitment to centering the voices of campus sexual violence survivors in the creation of this important legislation.”

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