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**Heller, Gillibrand, McCaskill File Amendment to Improve Training for Victims of Campus Sexual Assault**

**(Washington, D.C.)** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV), along with Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Claire McCaskill (D-MO), today filed an amendment to the CJS Appropriations Bill (H.R. 4660) designed to improve training for individuals who are the initial points of contact for victims of campus sexual assault.

“The response from the initial point of contact, whether campus officials, victim advocates or law enforcement officials, is often extremely influential on the victim, which is why proper training is so important. After hearing from a range of individuals, including at a roundtable in Las Vegas last week, I am extremely pleased to work with my colleagues on this amendment. It’s essential that any funding for this extremely sensitive and important issue be utilized to ensure that these victims receive thoughtful advice and the most accurate information possible after their traumatic experience,” said **Senator Heller**.

“When our young people go on to higher education, it should be an opportunity to learn, grow, pursue their dreams and prepare for their future careers,” said **Senator Gillibrand**. “But the price of a college education should not include a 1 in 5 chance of being sexually assaulted. To solve this crisis, we must come at it from every angle, and we know that when an assault does occur, the initial point of contact for the survivor from a trained professional is critically important. This is an important step of many and I look forward to continue working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to end the scourge of sexual assault on our college campuses, hold offenders accountable, and keep our students safe. This is clearly not a Democratic or Republican problem to solve, I am optimistic that Congress can come together and act on behalf of our students and their families."

“As we take an in-depth look at how to best combat rape and sexual assaults on our college campuses, one of our most important tasks is ensuring that at the initial point of report of this crime, we’re giving students every possible resource,” said **Senator McCaskill**. “To ensure we are truly protecting students and bringing perpetrators to justice, our campus officials, law enforcement, and anyone who is the designated initial point of contact for a survivor, must be properly trained as a source of good information on this difficult issue.”

The amendment is also cosponsored by Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-NJ), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) and Mark Warner (D-VA).

The amendment introduced today reinforces and clarifies that funding for grants to reduce violent crimes against women on campus includes efforts to provide training for campus officials, victim advocates, or campus law enforcement officials who are the initial point of contact for victims of sexual assault. Specifically, the funding is allocated through the Campus Grants Program administered under the Office of Violence Against Women.

Heller, Gillibrand and McCaskill crafted this amendment in response to comments from a wide range of stakeholders, ranging from law enforcement to victim advocacy groups, regarding concerns that individuals may not be appropriately trained to be the primary point of contact for victims of sexual assault. These initial interactions can significantly affect a victim’s decision to complete a report, so primary points of contact - whether campus officials, advocates, or campus law enforcement officials - should be adequately trained in proper procedures for responding to victims of sexual assault.

The Office of Violence Against Women may award grant funds for a variety of purposes, including efforts to “develop, enlarge, or strengthen support services programs, including medical or psychological counseling, for victims of sexual offense crimes.” This amendment does not create any new grants, but reinforces the importance of improving these efforts in supporting and responding to victims of sexual offenses, especially for those critical first interactions.

Text of the amendment in PDF format is attached.

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