

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 16, 2014

Office of the Vice President
Co-Chair
White House Task Force to
Protect Students from Sexual Assault
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Office of the White House Council
on Women and Girls
Co-Chair
White House Task Force to
Protect Students from Sexual Assault
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Co-Chairs of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault,

Thank you for your leadership in addressing the disturbing prevalence of sexual violence at our Nation's institutions of higher education. We are writing to you today in support of your efforts to combat campus sexual assault, and to propose additional steps for consideration that we believe the Administration should take to address this alarming problem.

As you know, a Department of Justice report showed that nearly one in five women in college nationwide, and six percent of men in college nationwide, will be victims of attempted or actual sexual assault over the course of their undergraduate careers. According to the Department of Education, college campuses reported nearly 5,000 forcible sex offenses in 2012 alone. Further, college women are at higher risk for sexual assault than their non-college peers. This is an unacceptable reality that demands our collective immediate attention, and we applaud the mission of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault ("Task Force") as it prepares to recommend positive solutions to better protect America's students.

We look forward to reviewing the forthcoming proposals and recommendations of the Task Force as you work with Congress to develop a coordinated Federal response to campus rape and sexual assault. With the benefit of having listened to student survivors and advocates among other experts, we respectfully submit the following proposals for your consideration that can be acted upon immediately to address the following problems as outlined below.

1.) Streamline and Enhance Accountability for Higher Education Crime & Safety within the U.S. Department of Education

Currently the Secretary of Education has 28 separate offices that directly report to him or an Undersecretary, but not a single office whose sole mission is to address issues of violence prevention, sexual or otherwise, for institutions of higher education. The responsibilities associated with compliance and enforcement of the Clery Act are housed in the Federal Student Aid office reporting to the Under Secretary; while the Office for Civil Rights in charge of Title IX enforcement reports directly to the Secretary of Education. This inherent lack of coordination and information sharing between offices hinders compliance and enforcement activities under current federal law. To create better efficiency, we recommend coordinating both Clery and Title IX violations that involve

criminal acts or physical violence under one person within the U.S. Department of Education reporting directly to the Secretary.

2.) Require an Anonymous and Standardized Yearly Survey on All College Campuses with the Results Published Online

We know that sexual assault remains one of the most underreported crimes in America today. We also know that the published data under the Clery Act does not paint an accurate picture of safety on campus. Currently, there is a disincentive for colleges and universities to increase reporting as it puts them at a competitive disadvantage with other schools. A standardized, anonymous survey administered yearly on campuses, similar to the Department of Defense's own SAPRO survey, would level the playing field across all schools and provide the necessary data and information for school administrators to address issues of sexual assault and violence on campus. In addition, this new and important standard for transparency would provide an incentive for institutions to proactively and aggressively address systemic problems and create an environment that encourages victims to report rather than the current inverse set of incentives enabling schools to sweep problems under the rug. This data would also allow students and parents to have the tools needed to assess campus safety as a criterion for choosing an institution of higher learning.

3.) Require User-Friendly Access to Title IX and Clery Act Investigations and Resolutions

Title IX and Clery Act complaints can take years to process. Consumers have a right to know how many Title IX and Clery Act complaints and compliance reviews are outstanding at a school and how those challenges are resolved. The Department of Education should have a centralized, user-friendly, searchable database updated in a timely manner that delineates the Department of Education's pending investigations, enforcement actions and voluntary resolution agreements for all Title IX and Clery Act complaints and compliance reviews. The results of the aforementioned survey, as well as available Clery Report data, could easily be merged to create a Campus Safety Metric within the proposed College Scorecard in the U.S. Department of Education's College Affordability and Transparency Center.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of these proposals and look forward to working with you in the future to ensure the price of a college education doesn't include a one in five chance of sexual assault for America's young women.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



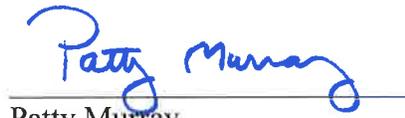
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Barbara Boxer
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Mazie Hirono
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