

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. \_\_\_\_\_

To provide for a grant program to support the establishment and operation of a national faith-based resource center on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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## A BILL

To provide for a grant program to support the establishment and operation of a national faith-based resource center on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Supporting Survivors  
5       from Faith-based Communities Act”

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       Congress finds as follows:

1           (1) 41 percent of American women and 26.3  
2           percent of American men experience, over their life-  
3           times, physical violence, sexual assault, or stalking  
4           by an intimate partner with associated impacts such  
5           as injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, the need  
6           for medical care, or law enforcement involvement.

7           (2) Faith and faith communities often play a  
8           central role in the lives of individuals experiencing  
9           domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or  
10          stalking, particularly in underserved or culturally  
11          specific populations. Faith and faith communities  
12          can be a source of strength and support for victims  
13          and survivors, and can improve survivors' outcomes  
14          and resilience.

15          (3) Many survivors of domestic or sexual vio-  
16          lence want to be able to talk about the faith or spir-  
17          itual dimensions of their healing journey with advo-  
18          cates, yet it is rare for advocacy programs to take  
19          into account religious or spiritual concerns raised by  
20          survivors.

21          (4) Studies have found that spiritual and reli-  
22          gious sources of resilience are common among sur-  
23          vivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child  
24          abuse.

1           (5) Clergy respondents have often reported that  
2 they have been approached by victims of domestic  
3 abuse and were often the first professional the sur-  
4 vivor approached.

5           (6) Religious involvement can promote greater  
6 psychological well-being for domestic violence sur-  
7 vivors, including a greater quality of life, and de-  
8 creased depression.

9 **SEC. 3. NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIO-**  
10 **LENCE, DATING VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT,**  
11 **AND STALKING IN FAITH COMMUNITIES.**

12 (a) DEFINITIONS.—

13           (1) CONSORTIUM OF ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—The  
14 term “consortium of eligible entities” means—

15           (A) an agreement among three or more eli-  
16 gible entities to collaborate in carrying out the  
17 purposes of this section, including at least two  
18 faith-based organizations representing different  
19 underserved faith communities and one cul-  
20 turally specific organization; and

21           (B) wherein at least one of the eligible en-  
22 tities of the consortium described in subpara-  
23 graph (A) has previously completed not fewer  
24 than two grants administered by the Office on  
25 Violence Against Women as a lead applicant.

1           (2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-  
2           ty”—

3                   (A) means—

4                           (i) a faith-based nonprofit, non-gov-  
5                           ernmental organization with a dem-  
6                           onstrated history of providing trauma-in-  
7                           formed, victim-centered training and tech-  
8                           nical assistance about the needs and expe-  
9                           riences of victims with faith, including a  
10                           population-specific organization, culturally  
11                           specific organization, or tribal organiza-  
12                           tion; or

13                           (ii) a non-faith-based culturally spe-  
14                           cific organization, including a tribal orga-  
15                           nization; and

16                   (B) does not include any organization or  
17                   subgrantee or contractor thereof that prioritizes  
18                   family cohesion, marriage, family or community  
19                   privacy, opposition to divorce, sexual purity, or  
20                   other considerations over the safety, autonomy,  
21                   needs, and preferences of victims.

22           A history of providing faith-based marriage coun-  
23           seling shall not, by itself, qualify an organization as  
24           an eligible entity.

1           (3) FAITH COMMUNITY.—The term “faith com-  
2           munity” means a community of individuals who  
3           share a common religion or spiritual practice, includ-  
4           ing a denomination within a religion or culturally-  
5           based spiritual practice, a specific congregation, or a  
6           culturally-based spiritual community.

7           (4) FAITH INSTITUTION.—The term “faith in-  
8           stitution” means an organized entity within a reli-  
9           gious community, such as a house of worship, de-  
10          nominational body, or other official structure of that  
11          community.

12          (5) RELIGIOUS DIVORCE DENIAL.—The term  
13          “religious divorce denial” means the refusal to co-  
14          operate in a religious divorce process or other reli-  
15          gious marriage termination process, thereby pre-  
16          venting the victim from exiting the marriage despite  
17          any civil legal proceedings or civil legal judgment of  
18          divorce.

19          (6) SPIRITUAL ABUSE.—The term “spiritual  
20          abuse” means the use or manipulation of religion,  
21          religious law, sacred texts, or spiritual beliefs as a  
22          means of exerting coercive control or to justify do-  
23          mestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or  
24          stalking.

1           (7) VICTIM WITH FAITH.—The term “victim  
2       with faith” means a victim of domestic violence, dat-  
3       ing violence, sexual assault, or stalking who identi-  
4       fies with a faith or spiritual tradition, including  
5       identifying culturally with a faith or spiritual tradi-  
6       tion, or holds religious or spiritual beliefs, whether  
7       or not they are officially affiliated with a faith com-  
8       munity or institution or participate in religious ob-  
9       servances.

10       (b) APPLICATION OF PROVISIONS OF VAWA.—The  
11       definitions and grant conditions set forth in section 40002  
12       of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C.  
13       12291) apply for purposes of this Act.

14       (c) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General, acting  
15       through the Director of the Office on Violence Against  
16       Women, may award grants to a consortium of eligible enti-  
17       ties in order to provide for the establishment and oper-  
18       ation of a national faith-based resource center on domestic  
19       violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The  
20       resource center shall provide education, training, and tech-  
21       nical assistance to faith communities, faith institutions,  
22       victim service providers, community-based and culturally  
23       specific organizations, and Federal, State, Tribal, and  
24       local agencies, and criminal and civil legal system stake-  
25       holders, and shall engage in other activities to—

1           (1) improve the response of victim service orga-  
2           nizations, legal assistance providers, law enforce-  
3           ment, prosecutors, courts, child protective services,  
4           housing providers, and other stakeholders to victims  
5           with faith; and

6           (2) enhance the capacity of faith communities  
7           and faith institutions to prevent and respond to do-  
8           mestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and  
9           stalking.

10          (d) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant  
11          under this section, a consortium of eligible entities shall  
12          submit an application to the Attorney General at such  
13          time, in such manner, and containing such information as  
14          the Attorney General may require, including—

15               (1) information to demonstrate a collective his-  
16               tory of providing training and technical assistance to  
17               one or more faith communities about trauma-in-  
18               formed, victim-centered prevention and responses to  
19               domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault,  
20               and stalking;

21               (2) information to demonstrate a collective his-  
22               tory of providing training and technical assistance  
23               about one or more faith communities and the needs  
24               of victims with faith to mainstream victim service  
25               providers;

1           (3) an attestation that the safety and autonomy  
2 of victims with faith and their children are the pri-  
3 mary priority of all consortium members, and con-  
4 sortium members, subgrantees, or contractors will  
5 not prioritize family cohesion, marriage, family or  
6 community privacy, opposition to divorce, sexual pu-  
7 rity, or other considerations over the safety, auton-  
8 omy, needs, and preferences of victims;

9           (4) a plan to engage with experts from faith  
10 communities not directly represented by consortium  
11 members to provide training and technical assistance  
12 to and about those communities;

13           (5) evidence of longstanding relationships with  
14 faith-based organizations and stakeholders rep-  
15 resenting a variety of other faith communities; and

16           (6) a plan to establish and be advised by a vic-  
17 tim advisory working group composed of victims  
18 with faith, including those who are underserved for  
19 reasons in addition to faith, which shall meet peri-  
20 odically throughout the grant period to inform the  
21 activities carried out under the grant. Members of  
22 the victim advisory working group shall be com-  
23 pensated for their participation.

24           (e) USE OF FUNDS.—A consortium of eligible entities  
25 may use funds under this section to—

1           (1) provide training and technical assistance to  
2           faith communities, faith institutions, seminaries and  
3           clergy training programs, faith-based schools and in-  
4           stitutes of higher education, faith youth groups, cler-  
5           gy and lay leaders, and other faith stakeholders to  
6           equip them to—

7                   (A) understand and recognize domestic vio-  
8                   lence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalk-  
9                   ing, including the impact on children;

10                   (B) draw upon faith values and texts to  
11                   raise awareness about and address domestic vi-  
12                   olence, dating violence, sexual assault, and  
13                   stalking;

14                   (C) develop and implement prevention pro-  
15                   grams that are consistent with faith teachings  
16                   and trauma-informed, victim-centered practices;

17                   (D) educate community members about re-  
18                   ligious arbitration agreements, terms of reli-  
19                   gious marital contracts, and other religious pre-  
20                   marital or marital documents intended to pre-  
21                   vent or discourage religious divorce denial;

22                   (E) support victims with faith within their  
23                   faith communities in a victim-centered and  
24                   trauma-informed manner;

1 (F) refer victims with faith to local victim  
2 service providers, including population-specific  
3 and culturally specific programs, and other re-  
4 sources;

5 (G) hold offenders accountable, including  
6 implementing restorative practices in collabora-  
7 tion with entities receiving funding authorized  
8 under section 41801 of the Violence Against  
9 Women Act of 1994;

10 (H) support offender behavior change;

11 (I) enact safety protocols to protect victims  
12 with faith;

13 (J) understand legal issues impacting vic-  
14 tims with faith and uphold protection orders  
15 and child custody orders;

16 (K) engage in peer-to-peer learning and  
17 teaching, including with other faith commu-  
18 nities;

19 (L) participate in coordinated community  
20 responses;

21 (M) prevent and respond to forced mar-  
22 riage; or

23 (N) undertake other activities to prevent,  
24 respond to, address, or support victims of faith;

1           (2) provide training and technical assistance to  
2 victim service providers and State and Tribal coalitions,  
3 tions, legal service providers, housing providers, and  
4 other nonprofit organizations working with victims  
5 with faith, and to criminal and civil justice agencies,  
6 including law enforcement, prosecutors, courts, probation  
7 and parole staff, and child protective services  
8 to empower them to—

9           (A) incorporate faith communities into coordinated  
10 community responses;

11           (B) address unique needs and experiences  
12 of victims with faith, including spiritual abuse;

13           (C) understand and address barriers that  
14 victims with faith face when seeking safety and  
15 services, including unconscious bias;

16           (D) implement faith-specific considerations  
17 and best practices for working with and supporting  
18 victims with faith, including—

19           (i) providing religiously-appropriate  
20 food and dietary accommodations in shelters  
21 and transitional housing;

22           (ii) to the greatest extent practicable,  
23 understanding and taking into account  
24 faith-based modesty norms, dress requirements,  
25 and related cultural norms, includ-

1 ing during interactions involving law en-  
2 forcement personnel; and

3 (iii) accommodating daily prayer, rit-  
4 uals, or other faith-based observances, such  
5 as prayer timing and pre- and post-meal  
6 blessings;

7 (E) implement best practices for inter-  
8 acting with and collaborating with faith commu-  
9 nities;

10 (F) in the context of intimate partner  
11 homicides, honor faith traditions related to the  
12 care and handling of the deceased; or

13 (G) undertake other activities to prevent,  
14 respond to, address, or support victims of faith;

15 (3) provide appropriate training and technical  
16 assistance to other stakeholders, including—

17 (A) health professionals;

18 (B) researchers;

19 (C) disaster response coordinators and or-  
20 ganizers; and

21 (D) faith-based, secular, and non-sectarian  
22 social service agencies;

23 (4) support the Office on Violence Against  
24 Women in convening faith communities, victim serv-  
25 ice providers, culturally specific programs, popu-

1        lation-specific programs, victims, other stakeholders,  
2        and federal government personnel to identify areas  
3        of strength, ongoing challenges, and emerging issues  
4        to guide future training and technical assistance,  
5        and grantmaking; and

6            (5) support the establishment and operation of  
7        a victim advisory working group required under sub-  
8        section (c)(6), including compensation for members.

9        (f) ESTABLISHMENT PHASE.—During the first year  
10       of the initial grant cycle, the consortium shall use grant  
11       funds solely for the purpose of establishing the basic ad-  
12       ministrative and operational infrastructure necessary to  
13       operate the National Resource Center, including initial  
14       staffing, governance structures, and core systems to sup-  
15       port its activities, as well as developing partnerships to  
16       understand and address the needs of communities that are  
17       underserved for reasons other than, or in addition to,  
18       faith.

19       (g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
20       authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section  
21       \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2027 through 2031.

22       (h) AVAILABILITY OF GRANT FUNDS.—Funds appro-  
23       priated under this section shall remain available until ex-  
24       pended.

25       (i) RULES OF CONSTRUCTION.—

1           (1) Funds made available under this section  
2 shall not be used to proselytize, to promote any reli-  
3 gion or religious viewpoint, to promote religiosity or  
4 increased religious observance, or for any other pur-  
5 poses related to faith or religion that are prohibited  
6 under federal, state, Tribal, or local law or violate  
7 the Constitutional separation of religion and state.

8           (2) Funds made available under this section  
9 shall supplement, not supplant, existing Office on  
10 Violence Against Women grants focused on specific  
11 faith communities.

12 **SEC. 4. MODEL STATE CODE.**

13       The Attorney General shall, in consultation with ex-  
14 perts in religious divorce denial, advocates working with  
15 victims experiencing religious divorce denial, victims who  
16 have experienced religious divorce denial, faith leaders,  
17 faith communities, and population-specific victim service  
18 providers, develop and publish model State legislative lan-  
19 guage to address religious divorce denial. This model legis-  
20 lative language shall take into account relevant religious  
21 laws and cultural practices, and be designed to be work-  
22 able within affected faith communities, while remaining  
23 consistent with the requirements of the Constitution.

1 **SEC. 5. REPORTING AND EVALUATION.**

2 (a) REPORTS TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.—On the  
3 date that is 1 year after first receiving a grant under this  
4 Act, and annually thereafter for the duration of the grant  
5 period, each consortium of eligible entities shall submit to  
6 the Attorney General, acting through the Director of the  
7 Office on Violence Against Women, a report that in-  
8 cludes—

9 (1) a description of activities conducted under  
10 the grant and populations served; and

11 (2) an assessment of the effectiveness of such  
12 activities in achieving the purposes of this Act.

13 (b) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—Not later than Novem-  
14 ber 1 of each even-numbered fiscal year, the Director of  
15 the Office on Violence Against Women shall compile and  
16 summarize the reports submitted under subsection (a) and  
17 submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the House  
18 of Representatives and the Committee on the Judiciary  
19 of the Senate a report on the activities and effectiveness  
20 of the program established under this Act.