

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 23, 2019

Matthew Whitaker
Acting Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Dear Acting Attorney General Whitaker:

We write to inform you of the detrimental impact the government shutdown is having on critical resources for survivors of domestic violence.

In a report by the Chicago Tribune, we learned that due to the lapse in appropriations at the Department of Justice, the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline is vulnerable to closure.¹ The Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline is a 24/7 hotline that survivors of domestic violence use to access lifesaving resources across the state, including: shelters, legal advocates, crisis centers, and counseling. Because the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline receives funding from a Victims of Crime Act grant through the U.S. Department of Justice, its federal funding remains in question during the current lapse in appropriations.

38 million American women in this country are domestic abuse survivors, and when federally-funded programs are no longer available for their use, they may be forced to stay in dangerous relationships, their children may be vulnerable to abuse, or they may lose their homes and protection. To make matters worse, many of these women come from extreme poverty and sacrifice staying in dangerous relationships in order to provide food and shelter for their families.

Unfortunately, the 24/7 hotline in Illinois is not the only domestic violence resource that is underfunded or potentially inoperable due to the misguided government shutdown. According to a recent report from HuffPost², one from Glamour³, another detailed report in Arkansas⁴, and another in Oregon⁵, domestic violence shelters across the country are cutting costs because of the government shutdown, threatening the health and safety of our shared community.

As this shutdown has now reached historic lengths, in which an end does not seem near, shelters, hotlines, and resources are beginning to prepare for the worst which could lead to a cut in services and planned layoffs. That is why we, members of the U.S. House of Representatives, continue to support bipartisan funding bills to reopen the government, fund critical government programs, and pay American workers.

We strongly believe that the Department of Justice has an obligation to protect women from abuse and to fund life-saving programs. To resolve the pressing issue at hand, and to prevent these effects from happening in future lapses in appropriations, I respectfully request answers to the following questions:

1. In light of the current government shutdown, what does the Department of Justice plan on doing to mitigate the potential loss in services for domestic violence survivors?
2. Does the Department of Justice plan to expand or strengthen existing programs to support survivors of domestic violence?

3. In the event of another shutdown, what does the Department of Justice plan on doing to ensure that women continue to have access to federal domestic violence resources?

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



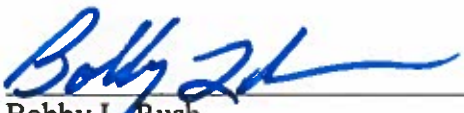
Daniel W. Lipinski
Member of Congress



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



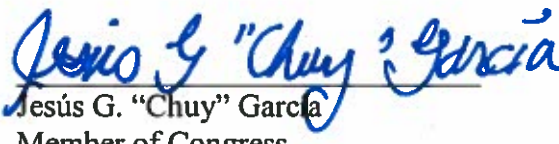
Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



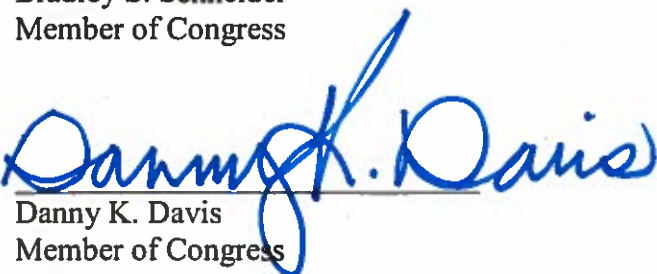
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

¹ "Government shutdown threatens Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline, which answered 25,000 calls last year", Chicago Tribune, 11 January 2019

² "Domestic violence shelters are cutting services because of the shutdown", HuffPost, 12 January 2019

³ "At what point do we have to start shutting down? Domestic violence shelters struggle to survive the government shutdown", Glamour, 14 January 2019

⁴ "Government shutdown hits Twin Lakes Area domestic violence shelters and social services", Baxter Bulletin, 13 January 2019

⁵ "Oregon Domestic Violence Shelters Face Financial Uncertainty During Federal Shutdown", Portland Mercury, 11 January 2019