

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

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Proclaiming April 2024 as Sexual Assault Awareness Month: Building Connected Communities and Prison Rape Elimination Act Compliance

The month of April uplifts an annual campaign to bring awareness to sexual assault and violence. The campaign focuses on the lived experience of victims and survivors of sexual assault and violence and how to prevent these assaults from occurring.

The movement grew during the 1970s with a specific focus on prevention and awareness of the pervasion of sexual assault and violence impacting thousands of known and unknown victims and survivors. During this period, the country saw the first rape crisis center due to the leadership of the Bay Area Women Against Rape and with statewide coalitions forming and building, starting with Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape in 1975 – the first of many coalitions. Events such as “Take Back the Night” marches gave courage and safe spaces for survivors to organize protests and rallies against rape, sexual assault, and push for reform, change, education, and awareness. These marches were the predecessors to “National Night Out” events that we see

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locally and across the country.

The 1980s also brought forward to the consciousness the ills of other forms of violence against women, such as domestic violence awareness. The very advocates and activists, coupled with those with lived experience of survivorship, mobilized and unified around the creation and implementation of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994. VAWA was the first bill that turned into a national law “requiring law enforcement to treat gender violence as a crime rather than a private matter.”¹ It also “strengthened legal protections for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence as well as expand services to survivors and their children.”²

In the 2000s, the first National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) was established, and the country saw a campaign to recognize April as National Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). In 2009, it was recognized by former President Barack Obama, when he was the first president to proclaim April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM).

This year, the SAAM theme is “Building Connected Communities”, which is a campaign that will help reduce the “likelihood of sexual abuse, assault, and harassment in our communities. We must strive to create strong, connected, communities that take care of each other. Communities that make decisions to ensure the safety and well-being of all members are critical to ending sexual violence worldwide.”³

According to NSVRC, over half of women and almost 1 in 3 men have

¹ https://www.justice.gov/d9/press-releases/attachments/2015/12/15/gender_bias_law_enforcement_guidance_with_disclaimer.pdf

² <https://www.nsvrc.org/blogs/how-we-got-here-history-sexual-assault-awareness-month#:~:text=VAWA%20was%20also%20designed%20to,and%20services%20that%20they%20needed>

³ <https://www.nsvrc.org/blogs/saam/saam-2024>

experienced sexual violence involving physical contact during their lifetimes; and 47% of all transgender people have experienced sexual assault at least once.

If we are to take a stance and stop sexual abuse, assault, and harassment before it happens, it will require all of us to work together to support healthy, safe, and respectful behaviors and environments – everyone has a role to place to help build a community that is safer, inclusive, and equitable.⁴

Additionally, we are also fully and consciously aware of the victimization of people who are incarcerated, youth and adults, that occurs in our carceral facilities, such as local juvenile detention facilities, jails, and state prisons. In 2003, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) was passed by both parties in Congress, unanimously, to not only analyze the incidents and effects of prison rape, but to also provide information, resources, recommendations, and funding to protect incarcerated individuals from sexual trauma and prison rape.⁵ The Act also concurrently created the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission to draft standards to eliminate prison rape, which was published in 2009, which became effect in 2012.⁶

Proclaiming April as SAAM for LA County should go beyond words alone, but to ensure that LA County is a safe and supportive space for victims and survivors and a no tolerance space for sexual assault and harassment, no matter who and where they are.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors proclaim April 2024 as Sexual Assault Awareness Month in Los Angeles County.

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct County

⁴ Id.

⁵ <https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/about/prison-rape-elimination-act>

⁶ Id.

Communications to promote the efforts of County Departments' educational and awareness campaigns and events for Sexual Assault Awareness Month, on the County website, including in high-usage languages.

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Request the Los Angeles County Sheriff and direct the Chief Probation Officer to:
 - a. Ensure all facilities that hold incarcerated adults and youth are Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) compliant with standards and training;
 - b. Provide the Board with a report back, in writing, in 60 days on PREA compliance status; and
 - c. Present to the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission and Probation Oversight Commission, respectively, on the contents of the PREA compliance status report back, within 30 days of its issuance.
2. Direct the Office of Inspector General, Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission, and the Probation Oversight Commission to review the PREA compliance status report back and provide the Board with a report back, in writing, within 60 days, with recommendations and proposed next steps for the LA Sheriff's Department and Probation Department to achieve and maintain PREA compliance.

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