

THOM TILLIS
NORTH CAROLINA

113 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BLDG
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
PH: (202) 224-6342

<https://tillis.senate.gov>

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES

ARMED SERVICES
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VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

May 27, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senators Shelby, Leahy, Moran, and Shaheen:

The 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has caused untold pain and suffering to the American people. While it now appears that we are past the peak of infections from this disease, there is another affliction which also requires our attention. The imposition of stay-at-home orders has heightened the risk of domestic violence for many in North Carolina. These stay-at-home orders provide abusers with greater ability to control their victims and to inflict both emotional and physical harm.

The increased number of calls received by law enforcement and by domestic violence shelters bears out the increased need for victims services in light of COVID-19 and stay-at-home orders. For example, in Asheville, North Carolina, Helpmate Domestic Violence Services has seen a forty-four percent increase in requests for shelter and a seventeen percent increase in calls to their domestic violence hotline. Similarly, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department reported an eighteen percent increase in domestic violence calls in March 2020. And in Wilmington, domestic violence shelters and services are experiencing an increased number of calls and demands for services, with one non-profit experiencing a one hundred and fourteen percent increase in calls alone.

These numbers are an example of the challenges being faced by domestic violence victims across North Carolina. Domestic violence knows no boundaries, and affects our largest and smallest communities alike. As the government continues to encourage its citizens to stay home in order to save lives, we must be mindful that home is not a safe place for all of our people.

CHARLOTTE OFFICE:
9300 HARRIS CORNERS PKWY
SUITE 170
CHARLOTTE, NC 28269
PH: (704) 509-9087

RALEIGH OFFICE:
310 NEW BERN AVE
SUITE 122
RALEIGH, NC 27601
PH: (919) 856-4630

HIGH POINT OFFICE:
1840 EASTCHESTER DR
SUITE 200
HIGH POINT, NC 27265
PH: (336) 885-0685

GREENVILLE OFFICE:
1694 E ARLINGTON BLVD
SUITE B
GREENVILLE, NC 27858
PH: (252) 329-0371

HENDERSONVILLE OFFICE:
1 HISTORIC COURTHOUSE SQ
SUITE 112
HENDERSONVILLE, NC 28792
PH: (828) 693-8750

In previous COVID-19 related legislation, Congress neglected to provide additional resources to combat domestic violence. Organizations serving domestic violence victims are facing reduced revenue from private donations and increased demand for services due to COVID-19.

In light of these challenges, I urge you to ensure that adequate funding is provided in any future spending bills to address and combat domestic violence. Funding to fight domestic violence will save lives and livelihoods, and will help those in greatest need gain access to services when they need it most.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thom Tillis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T".

Senator Thom Tillis