



September 16, 2021
Statement of Esta Soler,
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Following Testimony from Gymnasts, Senate Must Pass Violence Against Women Act

“They were strong, courageous and bold. They shared their traumas and demanded accountability. They spoke out, not just for themselves, but for all survivors of child sexual abuse. They stood up for a future in which nobody suffers the way they did and no system fails those who have been assaulted and raped.

Yesterday the nation was transfixed as four brave gymnasts testified before the U.S. Senate. We were awed by their strength and resolve to fix a system that utterly let them down.

Simone Biles, McKayla Maroney, Aly Raisman, and Maggie Nichols have carved a place in history not just because of what they accomplished in the gym, because of the change they are demanding from our institutions and our society.

Here at FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE, we know that progress depends on Congress reauthorizing the *Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)*, which includes the Sexual Assault Services Program and Rape Prevention and Education Program. The U.S. House of Representatives has reauthorized VAWA, but it’s been stalled in the U.S. Senate for much too long.

That needs to change. The U.S. Senate must reauthorize the *Violence Against Women Act* immediately. There’s simply no excuse for any further delay. That’s one of the best ways for lawmakers to step up for Simone, McKayla, Aly, Maggie and everyone who needs their protection and support.”

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ABOUT FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE:

For more than 30 years, FUTURES has been providing groundbreaking programs, policies and campaigns that empower individuals and organizations working to end violence against women and children around the world. Striving to reach new audiences and transform social norms, FUTURES trains professionals such as doctors, nurses,

judges and athletic coaches on improving responses to violence and abuse. FUTURES also works with advocates, policymakers and others to build sustainable community leadership and educate people everywhere about the importance of respect and healthy relationships.