

The Tech Safety for Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking Act

In the United States, 27% of women and 11% of men experience some form of physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner. Increasingly, many victims of intimate partner violence also experience nonphysical forms of abuse. The proliferation of technology and its pervasive impact on everyday life has only made nonphysical abuse more common and more devastating for victims. According to a 2021 study by the National Network to End Domestic Violence, 97% of the programs providing support to victims of intimate partner violence have indicated that abusers are making use of technology to stalk, harass, or control victims. Tech-enabled abuse has only gotten more common and more severe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tech-enabled abuse takes many forms and runs the gamut of technical sophistication, from the most basic social media platforms and phone-based apps to specialty spyware apps, demonstrating that tech-enabled abuse does not require huge financial resources or complex knowledge of technology.

Despite the scope and seriousness of tech-enabled abuse, advocates who work with domestic violence victims and survivors report low levels of confidence in being able to recognize and address tech-enabled abuse. In some localities, organizations and universities have tried to fill this gap by creating partnerships to combine both domestic violence and technology expertise.

The Tech Safety for Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking Act would take two significant actions to combat tech-enabled abuse:

- First, it would authorize a pilot project that the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women would run to establish more tech-enabled abuse clinics. The grant program would provide \$2 million grants for up to 15 clinics and other partnerships providing support to sexual and domestic violence victims who are experiencing technology-enabled abuse.
- Second, it would establish an additional grant program, also under the Office on Violence Against Women, for nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education to develop and implement training and educational programs and technical assistance for organizations and individuals who provide support for victims of tech-enabled abuse.

The bill is endorsed by the following organizations: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, National Network to End Domestic Violence, Legal Momentum, EndTAB, New Beginnings, Clinic to End Tech Abuse, Technology-Enabled Coercive Control Initiative housed in the Sexual Violence Law Center, Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Sexual Assault Support Services (Oregon), Center for Hope and Safety (Oregon), Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force, and Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence (Oregon).