Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 16, 2014

Ronald M. Berkman, President
Cleveland State University
2121 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115

Dear President Berkman,

We write to you this October, during domestic violence awareness month as students have returned to college campuses. To us, this moment in time presents an opportunity to provide education, foster relationships, and to serve equally our young constituents and higher education administrators adapting to dynamic change in laws and responsibilities.

One in five students experience rape or sexual assault while they are in college, and in the vast majority of cases, roughly eighty percent, the victim knows the attacker. Recognizing that less than five percent of rapes and attempted rapes of college students are reported to campus authorities or law enforcement, we must work together to find solutions to keep our students safe.

As you are aware, three pieces of federal legislation govern the rules about sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking in higher education -- Title IX of the Equal Opportunity in Education Act, the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (The Clery Act), and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 (VAWA). Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in federally funded education programs and activities, and requires entities receiving federal financial assistance to respond promptly and effectively to sexual violence against students.

The Campus Sexual Violence Elimination (Campus SaVE) Act, part of VAWA, builds on the Clery Act, a landmark law requiring colleges and universities across the country to provide annual statistics of incidents of crime on and around campus. As of March 2014, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) expects Campus SaVE requirements to be implemented and will begin enforcement.

Our goal is to connect you to the extensive national, state, and local resources available to ensure compliance and to create safe communities on Ohio campuses.

The notable legal changes required by Campus SaVE are expansions of Clery Act requirements. This includes instituting a plan to increase transparency by requiring data collection on a broader range of sexual violence incidents on campus and implementation of an improved complaint process. This process should be one in which victims feel supported and their rights are known throughout their case's progression. Additionally, institutions are required to create an equitable disciplinary process, whether adapting current processes or establishing new ones. Further, Campus SaVE provisions are offering schools federal resources to improve current practices while requiring campus education and awareness programs.

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The Department is expected to issue final regulations on Campus SaVE annual security reports (ASRs) on November 1, 2014. Regulations will become effective July 1, 2015. These ARSs must be provided to students, employees, and prospective students annually on October 1st. Until then, institutions are required to make a good-faith effort to comply with the statutory provisions.

As you and your administration work to update campus initiatives, please take the opportunity to connect with local rape crisis centers and advocacy groups. Rape crisis centers are highly equipped to assist in the assessment and development of appropriate institutional plans to both prevent and respond to sexual violence. In particular, the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence is an umbrella organization serving the entire state through local rape crisis centers:

- The Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence- www.oaesv.org
- Ohio Higher Ed Board of Regents- www.ohiohighered.org

Several national organizations are also highly equipped to develop or augment appropriate institutional plans, including:

- The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence- www.endsexualviolence.org
- The American Association of University Women- www.aauw.org
- Know Your IX- www.knowyourix.org

Each of the aforementioned organizations has worked with victims of sexual assault extensively, knows the legal changes underway, and would welcome the opportunity to work closer with local campuses to improve responses to reported incidents and to reduce incidents altogether.

Thank you for making it a priority to keep students safe on and around your campus. Campus safety is surely among your highest priority. We share your commitment to ensuring student and faculty safety and stand ready to assist you in this endeavor in any way you deem helpful.

Sincerely,

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

Enclosure: Ohio Rape Crisis Centers Contact Flyer