

U.S. Rep. Moore: Introduces bill to protect survivors of sexual violence from unexpected medical costs

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WASHINGTON— On Monday, Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-WI), Congresswoman Linda T. Sánchez (D-CA), and Congresswoman Carol Miller (R-WV) introduced the No Surprises for Survivors Act, bipartisan legislation that will protect survivors of sexual violence from unexpected medical costs. Specifically, the legislation will ensure patients with private health insurance do not face out-of-pocket costs or surprise medical bills for forensic medical exams, commonly known as rape kits.

The bill is included in a broader package of mental health and consumer protection bills under consideration by the Ways and Means Committee.

“The last thing a survivor of sexual violence should have to worry about is an unexpected medical bill,” said **Congresswoman Gwen Moore**. “This legislation is needed because too many survivors, grappling with trauma, also become burdened with the cost of a forensic medical exam – even though they shouldn’t be. With our bipartisan bill, we build on VAWA’s no-cost coverage to ensure victims are protected from cost sharing for exams.”

“No one should have to worry about getting a surprise bill in the mail, especially following a traumatic experience like a sexual assault. Unfortunately, many survivors still find themselves stuck with unexpected charges,” said **Congresswoman Linda T. Sánchez**. “Our bipartisan bill will help right that wrong, ensuring more survivors have access to the care they need and deserve.”

“Sexual assault is one of the most abhorrent acts of violence a woman can experience,” said **Congresswoman Carol Miller**. “It is unacceptable for any

sexual assault victim to receive a bill for a forensic medical exam, which is critical to ensuring their recovery and collecting any evidence needed for an investigation. This commonsense, bipartisan legislation will protect victims and ensure no woman who experiences sexual violence has to pay a dime for a forensic medical exam.”

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) authorizes federal funds to be used for services that support victims of sexual violence. Under VAWA, states or another entity must provide no-cost forensic medical exams administered by certain providers. Unfortunately, independent analysis and media reports have found that some victims still receive bills for these services and can be left to pay for them out-of-pocket.

Accordingly, the No Surprises for Survivors Act protects victims of sexual violence from out-of-pocket expenses and surprise medical bills by:

- Requiring coverage of forensic medical exams with zero cost sharing. The bill requires private insurers to provide coverage, without cost-sharing, for forensic medical exams regardless of where they are administered (unless reimbursed by the state under VAWA).
- Protecting victims of sexual violence from certain surprise medical bills: The bill further provides that forensic medical exams are covered under the emergency services protections of the No Surprises Act, regardless of where they are performed.
- Facilitating reimbursement, where appropriate, from states: The bill specifies that if an individual receives a forensic medical exam where the state is responsible for the out-of-pocket costs associated with such exam, private insurers must provide appropriate notice to help victims avoid bills and streamline the reimbursement process.