

Attendees:

- Amara Legal Center
- Ayuda
- Children's Law Center
- Collective Action for Safe Spaces (CASS)
- DC Forensic Nurse Examiners (DCFNE)
- DC Health
- DC Rape Crisis Center (DCRCC)
- FAIR Girls
- HIPS
- Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA)
- Men Can Stop Rape (MCSR)
- Network for Victim Recovery of DC (NVRDC)
- Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG)
- Rights4Girls
- Safe Shores
- US Attorney's Office
- Washington Women's Foundation
- Elisabeth Olds, SAVRAA Independent Consultant
- Kate Mitchell, Committee Director, DC Council

I. Introductions and Icebreaker

II. SAVRAA Update

- a. Elisabeth Olds, SAVRAA Independent Consultant, provided an update to attendees on the current status of the SAVRAA 2019 bill.
- b. Passed the first reading on committee of the Whole unanimously. The final reading will be on Tuesday, November 5, 2019. The meeting will likely be in room 500.
- c. The bill went through markup over the summer and was changed significantly between markup and what was introduced for first reading. Very little questioning by the point that it reached first reading.
- d. Next steps: Council will vote. After vote, Mayor will sign it and then it has to go through Congress.
- e. Coalition members should expect an email from Elisabeth Olds; implementation of the bill will require a series of meetings and working groups in order to set up, establish, and launch expanded advocacy aspects of the bill.
  - i. The legislation allows for a one year grace period to organize and establish expanded advocacy services and beta-test logistics

III. Coalition Boundaries

- a. Moving forward, when the Coalition shares position statements from Members and Stakeholders, a disclaimer will be included that states the materials are not reflective of the opinions or positions of the Coalition.
- b. DCCESV is happy to share job announcements, workshops, events, talking points, position statements, and so on. Please feel free to send these to Coalition organizers so that they can be shared to Membership.
- c. An area of growth for the organization is discussing how information gets shared, and what appropriate boundaries around this look like

- IV. Community Safety and Health Amendment Act of 2019
- a. While there are shared goals and values amongst service providers in the District around this issue, the bill has been divisive for the community. The Coalition called upon attendees to discuss their organizational mandates, how they came to the positions they took, and what their process looks like for making organizational policy decisions
  - b. Regardless of the bill's status, the issues addressed remain important. Attendees were encouraged to consider the role of the Coalition when there is a complicated perspective as to what positions Members take.
  - c. A representative from Amara Legal Center explained their organizational process in choosing a position on this bill.
    - i. Amara was unable to take an official stance on this act for several reasons. Their mission statement is to assist anyone who has been harmed by commercial sex, which includes both sex workers and victims of trafficking. In their client population, there are many differences of opinion. They advocate for whatever their clients want, which can vary greatly depending on the client
    - ii. Amara resolved that their best stance was not to take a stance on the bill, but instead to highlight the kinds of harm all of their clients face in a variety of contexts
    - iii. Amara also declined to support conversations about just criminalizing buyers. Some trans sex workers may be arrested as buyers. They have been a part of conversations that highlight that this conversation is very able. All of these reasons guided Amara as to why they would not take a position on the bill
  - d. A representative from Collective Action for Safe Spaces (CASS) spoke to their position. CASS largely works with sex workers who have been affected by police violence and street violence.
    - i. Their work is rooted in a survivor-centered lens that focuses on removing the state and confronting the fact that a lot of violence sex workers face is at the hands of the police and the carceral system.
    - ii. Their clients are also concerned about seeking jobs, housing, healthcare, and stability. CASS stated that they followed the lead of HIPS to find solutions that are centered around not involving more forms of violence, and not criminalizing an exchange between consenting adults over the age of 18 years old.
    - iii. CASS did not support strategies to end demand because it has an element of criminalization, and because it continues to involve the police; police involvement can be challenging in terms of figuring out who is a sex worker and who is a buyer.
  - e. A representative from HIPS shared their position. HIPS stated that their organization had a history of being agnostic on the issue for many years. Their work started out by saving young people both in trafficking and non-trafficking situations.
    - i. As they continued their work, they noticed that direct involvement with law enforcement was typically something most of their clients were not interested in. The organization has never relied on law enforcement to provide services, and noticed that their work became more complicated when law enforcement was involved. Thus, they became strong supporters of this bill.
    - ii. HIPS also lifted up that a challenge of the legislative process for the Community Health and Safety Act has been an unnecessary and dangerous pitting of whose victim story is relevant and whose victim story deserves to be heard.
    - iii. The room acknowledged that there are structural reasons as to why people are being pitted against each other, and that all victim experiences can coexist. In fact, many organizations serve people in both capacities.

- f. Children’s Law Center spoke next about how they reach policy positions in their organization. CLC pulls in lawyers across the organization who are working on different issues, and discusses whether they think their expertise will be useful on a given issue. For this bill, they decided to take a position that focused on the impact that the legislation would have on children and youth in the foster care system.
  - i. Children’s Law Center pulled from both international and domestic research. They 100% support the intent and goals of the legislation; however, in terms of their understanding of the market impact on youth under 18, their position was that there was not enough research to say with certainty that the bill wouldn’t create a harmful direct impact on this vulnerable population
  - ii. CLC’s position considered the most problematic legal implications, loopholes, and unintended consequences of the legislation as:
    - 1. Effect on market demand
    - 2. Repeal of the MPD requirement for referring children to trafficking services
    - 3. Removal of provisions for body houses, that would make it such that law enforcement would not be able to enter houses to retrieve children
  - iii. Their focus on the bill came from a child-centered perspective
- g. Rights4Girls takes the position that the sex trade is inherently violent. They agree that people who are engaged in selling sex should not be criminalized. They focus on both youth and adults.
  - i. Rights4Girls reached their policy decision based on their mission, and their focus on working with trafficking survivors and people who have been engaged in the sex trade. They were directly in conversation with the survivors they work with, and were concerned that increased demand would increase trafficking.
- h. DCCESV acknowledged that all the organizations who had shared their positions and their process had arrived at their policy position due to their organizational mandate, and by listening to their clients. For as difficult as this issue is, it is critical for organizations to listen to the folks they work with in order to settle on their position.
- i. FAIR Girls expressed a desire to see more respect in the Committee room and in advocacy, and regretted that conversations around the bill had not been approached from a position of mutual respect and consensus building.
  - i. Getting in the same room as people with different perspectives—much like the Coalition meeting—is key to building nuanced policy positions.
- j. DCRCC echoed concerns about the safety of the Public Hearing for victims of trauma and assault. Folks were triggered and survivors of sexual violence were being impacted. DCRCC received hotline calls and drop-ins from many clients.
  - i. As a community, we must be able to have these conversations with decency and order. This requires putting provisions in place to protect the welfare and health of survivors of sexual violence. This was not the case for this bill.
  - ii. This hearing divided the community in a really ugly—and sometimes traumatizing—way.
- k. Ayuda explained that they did not take an official position; they shared the language of the bill and everyone’s talking points with relevant teams in their office.
  - i. There was disagreement among staff and leadership over which position to take, so they did not take one.
- l. Safe Shores acknowledged that it was important to consider the impact of law enforcement on people who are engaged in sex work.
  - i. As much as Safe Shores is concerned about increased demand that might be caused by the bill, the organization also believes that the impact of law enforcement needs to be more centered in Coalition conversations about the bill.

- m. DCRCC emphasized that moving forward from the Public Hearing on this bill, there need to be intentional and deliberate action on the part of community in order to collaborate and heal divisions.
  - n. DCCESV encouraged members to discuss how best to continue having these conversations from a Coalition lens, and the particular role of the Coalition in discussing issues where Members disagree
    - i. NVRDC observed that there were a lot of points of consensus and shared concerns in the room. They stated that more conversations of this nature prior to the hearing would have been helpful so that service organizations could determine possible consensus among the Coalition.
      - 1. NVRDC also expressed concerns that the term “consensus” can be misleading to the public because it may obscure dissenting organizations’ opinions.
      - 2. NVRDC also voiced that organizations who don’t have policy teams may be at a disadvantage in this regard.
    - ii. JCADA responded to these concerns by stating that in-person meetings have been an opportunity for Members to break down barriers for folks who do not have dedicated policy teams or the opportunity to circulate talking points. JCADA lifted up SAVRAA as an excellent example of the Coalition identifying points of consensus
- V. Policy Process Discussion + FY 20 Priorities
- a. DCCESV began this section of the meeting by acknowledging that the Coalition is a project between two organizations—DCRCC and MCSR—and that it is still extremely new. Ultimately, this needs to be its own standalone organization with as staff that can focus exclusively on Coalition work.
    - i. Previously, the Coalition has not created formal policy positions; this is due to bandwidth and the newness of the Coalition
    - ii. Our Membership structure is as follows: organizations for whom a core component of their work is around sexual violence are Voting Members. Key Stakeholders are those who may have other important things to contribute, but do not have voting status because of their agency structures.
      - 1. There have been agendas previously for members-only business. Folks have been encouraged to attend these meetings so that areas of consensus can be identified among members.
      - 2. Member-only discussions around SAVRAA marked a more formal effort around building consensus. Four areas of consensus were identified amongst voting members, and the Coalition only shared the four points of agreement with the Council.
        - a. These areas of consensus were written up and sent to Members with opportunities to comment and offer concerns and feedback
        - b. This is an example of a time when the Coalition took a behind-the-scenes, Council-facing position
        - c. DCCESV sought both public and confidential feedback from all Members, even those who did not attend the in-person meeting in July
    - iii. The convening organizations remain committed to getting the Coalition to a place where it can be its own standalone entity. They remain committed to doing that in partnership with all Members and Stakeholders. DCCESV reminded attendees that some of the fine-tuned things that folks may want are not appropriate for us to try and build infrastructure around at this phase of the coalition.
    - iv. How do Members want to go about engaging in policy while also understanding that there are boundaries and limitations to what we can do in this current organizational form?
  - b. NVRDC asked about the voting process for Coalition consensus and whether there was something official or enshrined. They suggested that a FY 20 priority should be establishing protocols.

- c. US Attorney's Office stated that transparency is important. As a Key Stakeholder, they would appreciate knowing the outcome of a Coalition vote.
- d. FAIR Girls pointed to the comprehensive notes, individual follow-up sent out after the previous meeting, and entreaties for feedback and commentary as examples of strong communication from the Coalition and efforts toward transparency.
- e. DCCESV agreed that transparency is important. The Coalition did not hear from Members who were not present at the meeting about their feedback on the consensus points that the Coalition took on SAVRAA. They encouraged attendees to share ideas about how best to move forward.
  - i. Safe Shores expressed that creating a natural space for dissent and inviting folks with minority opinions to share could build trust
  - ii. NVRDC restated the importance of protocols to establish what everything means, and to create transparency. They suggested the possibility for some shared committee work.
  - iii. Men Can Stop Rape stated the importance of accountability among Members. This includes showing up to meetings, responding to emails, texts, and calls. Convening organizations end up having to go beyond the scope of work to continue pouring

VI. Second Look Act

- a. Kate Mitchell, Committee Director for the DC Council's Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety, shared information about the Second Look Act, a bill the DC Council is considering.
- b. The Incarceration Reduction Act (IRA) was passed three years ago as a part of a larger omnibus juvenile justice bill that ended juvenile life without parole. This bill was responsive to a line of Supreme Court opinions that overturned the use of juvenile life without parole in most situations. The bill created a mechanism for sentence review.
  - i. In the District, many people were sentenced as children. These people now have the opportunity to go before a panel, like a parole hearing, and apply for resentencing.
    - 1. People who have been in the carceral system for at least 15 years can apply.
    - 2. In the District, there was a legacy of extreme harsh sentencing during the crack epidemic
- c. The process takes about a year to a year and a half. Applicants are typically represented by Public Defense Services, panel attorneys, or large pro bono firms.
  - i. There is a statutory right for the victim of whatever crime (or their family members) to participate if they want to. The burden is on the petitioner to make the case that they have been rehabilitated and to provide a reentry plan
  - ii. 20 individuals have been resentenced to time served. There has been zero recidivism.
- d. In the last few months, USAO began to advocate against the Second Look Act.
  - i. USAO has opposed all IRA cases except for one, and has said that the IRA process is traumatizing for victims
- e. Second Look would raise the age to include people for resentencing who had committed crimes between the ages of 18-24. This tracks with science about development in youth.
- f. Kate encouraged people to reach out to the Council with their thoughts and positions on the Second Look Act.
  - i. In their experience, about 1/3 of victims want resentencing, 1/3 do not, and 1/3 do not want to be involved.
  - ii. Some have been interested in a restorative justice approach
  - iii. One major challenge has been a lack of notification to victims prior to resentencing hearing. Victims have also not been offered supportive services.

- g. There has been a lot of racist rhetoric around this bill that doesn't actually reflect the experiences of the guys who have been resentenced through IRA while incarcerated or after release. This is inappropriate and alarming.
  - h. USAO clarified that they are not receiving information about victims until they receive it from PDS, and they need to figure out how to better engage and notify victims.
  - i. Men Can Stop Rape emphasized the importance of this bill, stating that the Sexual Assault community is aware that people who are incarcerated have often experienced trauma, sexual assault, and abuse before they are incarcerated.
    - i. While it is a non-traditional population for the Sexual Assault community to be showing compassion, concern, and innovation around, it's important; what would it look like if we could bring this expertise to incarcerated citizens? As a smaller city, we may have the capacity to be truly innovative and effective around this issue
- VII. Surveys
- a. The meeting concluded with surveys completed by attendees to provide feedback