

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 9544

To establish a pilot program to address technology-related abuse in domestic violence cases.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 14, 2022

Ms. ESHOO (for herself and Mrs. LESKO) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To establish a pilot program to address technology-related abuse in domestic violence cases.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Tech Safety for Vic-
5 tims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual As-
6 sault, and Stalking Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) In the United States, 27 percent of women
2 and 11 percent of men experience some form of
3 physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner.

4 (2) Many victims of intimate partner violence
5 also experience nonphysical forms of abuse.

6 (3) With the proliferation of digital technology,
7 technological abuse has become increasingly preva-
8 lent and pervasive among victims of intimate partner
9 violence.

10 (4) According to a 2021 study by the National
11 Network to End Domestic Violence, 97 percent of
12 the programs providing support to victims of inti-
13 mate partner violence have indicated that abusers
14 are making use of technology to stalk, harass, or
15 control victims.

16 (5) In the United States, 1 in 3 women under
17 the age of 35 report being sexually harassed online,
18 and over half of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individ-
19 uals report being the target of online abuse based on
20 their sexual orientation or gender.

21 (6) Of victims who are stalked using tech-
22 nology—

23 (A) 67 percent received unwanted phone
24 calls, voice messages, or text messages;

1 (B) 50 percent received unwanted emails
2 or messages via the internet;

3 (C) about 35 percent said their activities
4 were monitored using social media;

5 (D) 27 percent experienced the offender
6 posting or threatening to post inappropriate,
7 unwanted, or personal information about them
8 on the internet; and

9 (E) 19 percent said the offender spied on
10 them or monitored their activities using tech-
11 nologies such as listening devices, cameras, or
12 computer or cellphone monitoring software.

13 (7) Technological abuse runs the gamut of tech-
14 nical sophistication, from the most basic social
15 media platforms and phone-based apps to specialty
16 stalkerware apps, demonstrating that technological
17 abuse does not require huge financial resources or
18 complex knowledge of technology.

19 (8) Rapid advances in the technology and meth-
20 ods for technological abuse present challenges for
21 advocates seeking to advise victims and prevent tech-
22 nological abuse.

23 (9) The integration of trained technology ex-
24 perts into survivor support networks has been suc-

1 cessful in preventing and shielding survivors from
2 technological abuse.

3 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

4 In this Act:

5 (1) **DIRECTOR.**—The term “Director” means
6 the Director of the Office on Violence Against
7 Women.

8 (2) **ELIGIBLE CONSORTIUM.**—The term “eligi-
9 ble consortium” means an association—

10 (A) between—

11 (i)(I) 1 or more institutions of higher
12 education that offers a master’s, doctoral,
13 or vocational program in information tech-
14 nology, cybersecurity, computer science, or
15 other similar technological discipline; or

16 (II) 1 or more private or public sector
17 partners in the community with a technical
18 workforce and a plan for recruiting tech-
19 nologists or volunteers to work alongside a
20 victim service provider (as defined in sec-
21 tion 40002(a) of the Violence Against
22 Women Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C.
23 12291(a))); and

24 (ii) 1 or more public or private domes-
25 tic violence or sexual violence centers; and

1 (B) which has a letter of support from the
2 local, State, Tribal, or territorial government
3 with jurisdiction over the area in which the ac-
4 tivities to combat technological abuse will be
5 implemented.

6 (3) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The
7 term “institution of higher education” has the
8 meaning given that term in section 101 of the High-
9 er Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

10 (4) PILOT PROGRAM.—The term “pilot pro-
11 gram” means the pilot program established under
12 section 4(a)(1).

13 (5) TECHNOLOGICAL ABUSE.—The term “tech-
14 nological abuse” has the meaning given the term in
15 section 40002(a)(40) of the Violence Against
16 Women Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(40)).

17 **SEC. 4. PILOT PROGRAM TO COMBAT TECHNOLOGICAL**
18 **ABUSE.**

19 (a) PILOT PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Director, in accordance
21 with paragraph (2), shall establish a pilot program
22 under which the Director may award grants to eligi-
23 ble consortia to combat technological abuse.

24 (2) CONSULTATION.—In preparing to establish
25 the pilot program—

1 (A) the Director shall consult with—

2 (i) the Secretary of Health and
3 Human Services;

4 (ii) the Secretary of Education; and

5 (iii) the Chairman of the Federal
6 Communications Commission; and

7 (B) the Director and the officers described
8 in subparagraph (A) shall consult with relevant
9 stakeholders, including—

10 (i) groups that work on reducing tech-
11 nological abuse; and

12 (ii) population specific and culturally
13 specific victim service providers.

14 (3) APPLICATION.—An eligible consortium de-
15 siring a grant under this section shall submit to the
16 Director an application at such time, in such man-
17 ner, and containing or accompanied by such infor-
18 mation, as the Director may reasonably require.

19 (4) GRANT LIMITS.—

20 (A) AWARD AMOUNT.—A grant awarded
21 under the pilot program shall be in an amount
22 that is not more than \$2,000,000.

23 (B) NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS.—Not more
24 than 15 grants may be awarded under the pilot
25 program.

1 (5) DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The pilot
2 program shall terminate on the date that is 5 years
3 after the date of the first award under the pilot pro-
4 gram.

5 (b) USE OF GRANT FUNDS.—A recipient of a grant
6 under this section may use the amounts received under
7 the grant to combat technological abuse, including for—

8 (1) the purchase of new technological devices
9 for victims and survivors of technological abuse; and

10 (2) any other use, including the provision of vic-
11 tim services, that will reduce technological abuse or
12 assist victims and survivors of technological abuse.

13 (c) PILOT PROGRAM REVIEW.—

14 (1) DURING PILOT PROGRAM.—Not later than 3
15 years after the date of the first award under the
16 pilot program, the Director shall submit to each
17 committee of Congress with jurisdiction of the activi-
18 ties carried out under the pilot program a report—

19 (A) reviewing the efficacy of the pilot pro-
20 gram;

21 (B) indicating challenges to implementa-
22 tion and possible solutions; and

23 (C) including a recommendation relating to
24 whether the pilot program should be turned
25 into a permanent program.

1 (2) AFTER PILOT PROGRAM TERMINATION.—

2 Not later than 1 year after the date on which the
3 pilot program terminates under subsection (a)(5),
4 the Director shall submit to each committee of Con-
5 gress with jurisdiction of the activities carried out
6 under the pilot program a report reviewing the effi-
7 cacy of the pilot program, including best practices
8 and improvements needed to combat technological
9 abuse.

10 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
11 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are nec-
12 essary to carry out this section.

13 **SEC. 5. GRANT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE EDUCATION ON**
14 **TECHNOLOGICAL ABUSE.**

15 (a) GRANT PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—The Director
16 in consultation with the Secretary of Education and the
17 Secretary of Health and Human Services shall establish
18 a program under which the Director may award grants
19 to nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher edu-
20 cation to develop and implement training and educational
21 programs and technical assistance for organizations and
22 individuals who provide support for victims of techno-
23 logical abuse.

1 (b) MULTIPLE GRANTS.—A recipient of a grant
2 under section 4 is not barred from receiving a grant under
3 this section.

4 (c) USE OF GRANT FUNDS.—A nonprofit organiza-
5 tion or institution of higher education shall use the
6 amounts received under a grant under this section to de-
7 velop tools, curricula, and other materials.

8 (d) GRANT PROGRAM LIMITS.—

9 (1) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—The Director may
10 award a total of not more than \$20,000,000 in
11 grants under this section.

12 (2) PERIOD OF GRANTS.—The Director shall
13 award grants under this section for a period of 5
14 years.

15 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
16 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are nec-
17 essary to carry out this section.

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