

*Third  
Thursdays*  
**WOMEN** in  
**RETIREMENT**

**SAFER Act:  
Retirement Savings  
Saving Lives**

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# SAFER Act: Retirement Savings Saving Lives

August 17, 2023 | 4:30 - 5:30 pm ET

Hosted by: ARA Third Thursday Committee



# Speakers



**Sally Schaeffer,**  
Consultant/Owner,  
Uncorked Advocates  
*(Moderator)*



**Caroline Frauman,**  
Tax Counsel, Rep.  
Gwen Moore (D-WI)



**Catherine Beane, VP,**  
Public Policy and  
Advocacy, YWCA USA



**Sarah Gonzalez, Associate  
Director, Workplace &  
Economic Justice, Futures  
Without Violence**



# Trauma Warning

This webinar will be discussing the impact of intimate partner violence. We want to reduce the risk of re-traumatization. Domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and stalking are difficult - but important - issues to discuss, however, discussing these topics may re-surface lived experiences or vicarious trauma. The Domestic Violence and RAINN hotlines are available for support and you are encouraged to take care of their needs and to step away at any time.

## **Domestic Violence Hotline**

Phone: 800-799-7233

Web: [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)

## **Sexual Assault Hotline**

Phone: 1-800-656-4673

Web: [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

# The Savings Access for Escaping and Rebuilding (SAFER) Act

- Introduced in the House by Representatives Gwen Moore (D-WI-04) (pictured), Lucy McBath (D-GA-06), Lloyd Smucker (R-PA-11)
- Introduced in the Senate by Senators Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) and John Cornyn (R-TX)



# The Savings Access for Escaping and Rebuilding (SAFER) Act

- Section 72(t)(2)(K) provides a new exemption from the 10-percent additional tax on early distributions from qualified retirement plans for survivors of domestic abuse
- The distribution must be made during the one-year period beginning on a date on which the individual is a victim of domestic abuse by a spouse or domestic partner
- The maximum aggregate amount which may be treated as an eligible distribution is the lesser of \$10,000 (inflation adjusted) or 50 percent of the value of the employee's account under the plan

# The SAFER Act (cont.)

- Domestic abuse is defined as physical, psychological, sexual, emotional, or economic abuse, including efforts to control, isolate, humiliate, or intimidate the victim, or to undermine the victim's ability to reason independently, including by means of abuse of the victim's child or another family member living in the household
- A plan administrator may rely on the participant's certification that the distribution is an eligible distribution to a domestic abuse victim
- Any portion of an eligible distribution to a domestic abuse victim may generally be recontributed to a retirement plan
- The amendments made by this section apply to distributions made after December 31, 2023

# Domestic and Sexual Violence Affects All Communities

Women and girls of all ages, income levels, racial and ethnic communities, sexual orientations and religious affiliations experience violence in the form of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, trafficking and stalking.



# Scope of Issue

**1.3M victims/year** (according to HHS)

National DV Hotline **highest increase** in nearly 30 years

- In 2022: 770,000 calls/contacts to the National Hotline-  
**25% increase**

**1 in 4 women** is homeless because of violence committed against her

- **92% of homeless mothers** experienced severe physical and/or sexual abuse during their lifetime

# YWCA's Network and Programs

Largest network of DV/SA services providers

- More than 150 YWCAs in 44 states provide DV/SA services
- Provide housing, crisis hotlines, counseling, court assistance to more than 535,000 women and families/year
- Provide Financial Literacy Skills and Job/Work Skills training
  - Allstate Foundation provided financial management curriculum to every YWCA in the country

# Stories from DV Providers

- YWCA Central **Alabama**: DV shelter is **full**
- YWCA **Lancaster in PA**: **Waitlists** have grown, adult clients **doubled** & Hotline calls were **12% higher** in 2022
- YWCA **NE Indiana**: Year-over-year increases
  - In '21, highest number of clients ever
  - In '22, passed that historic high number by Sept.
  - This year, on trend to see 22% higher than last year.
- General trends of lack of affordable housing, untreated mental health and behavioral health needs.

# Economic Security & Safety

- Nearly **3 in 4 survivors (74%)** report **staying** with an abusive partner because they did not have the financial means to leave
- A study of survivors of domestic violence found that **nearly half (45.9%)** returned to their abusive partner within a year of leaving because they lacked the money to support themselves and their children

Sources: Hess, C., & Del Rosario, A. (2018). Dreams Deferred: A Survey on the Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Survivors' Education, Careers, and Economic Security (p. 53). Institute for Women's Policy Research.; Mary Kay Foundation. (2012). Truth About Abuse Survey Report. Mary Kay Foundation.; Anderson, M. A., Gillig, P. M., Sitaker, M., McCloskey, K., Malloy, K., & Grigsby, N. (2003). "Why Doesn't She Just Leave?": A Descriptive Study of Victim Reported Impediments to Her Safety.

# Seeking Safety is Expensive

## Considerations -

- dropping down to a single income
- relocation costs
- security measures
- legal fees

“ My abuser stole thousands of dollars from me and it cost me many thousands to escape, stay in motels, and to eventually get back on my feet. I also need to pay for therapy to heal from the experiences.”

“I am currently at least \$1,750 out of pocket for relocation expenses. I also do not have access to food and other household items that I could not bring with me, so I have to replace those until I can safely access my apartment again.”

# Impact of Economic Abuse

99% of survivors experience economic sabotage, economic control/coercion, and economic exploitation

= debt

= poor credit

= lack of savings

“My ex-husband left me with thousands of dollars in credit card debt in exchange for signing the divorce papers. I am living in a shady motel due to not being financially secure.”

“I am still very overwhelmed by the debt my abuser/ex-husband created and left me with. This journey is long because I am the sole provider for my children (their father will not pay child support). I have very little disposable income to pay debt collectors.”



<https://www.freefrom.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Survivors-Know-Best.pdf>

# Access to Unrestricted Financial Funds

- Allow survivors to address their unique and specific needs WITHOUT administrative hurdles or limitations on use
- Provides agency and independence and improves emotional well-being
- Promotes housing stability and safety

# Impact on Survivors

“Basically, I didn’t have to worry about, like, just trying to struggle just to, you know, make the payments on the rent... I just could like relax, I could relax for a little bit and save ... Save enough money where I can, yeah, just pay my rent month to month like I’m supposed to. So, it just put me in a better zone...”

“It was very important for me because I can keep a roof over my daughter’s head. And it’s even more amazing now because he’s not there so it’s more safer for her and I, as well. And ... my apartment is so convenient to my job, her school—everything.”



# Resources



<https://www.workplacesrespond.org>

**eliminating racism  
empowering women**

**ywca**

<https://www.ywca.org/>



[National Domestic Violence Hotline \(hehotline.org\)](http://hehotline.org)

Call 1-800-799-7233

[Love is Respect National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline \(loveisrespect.org\)](http://loveisrespect.org)

Call 1-866-331-9474

[Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network's \(RAINN\) National Sexual Assault Hotline \(rainn.org\)](http://rainn.org)

Call 800-656-HOPE (4673) to be connected with a trained staff member from a sexual assault service provider in your area.

[National Resource Center on Domestic Violence \(nrcdv.org\)](http://nrcdv.org)



*Thrive*

**MENTORING PROGRAM**

# Want to Pay It Forward?



**Be engaged. Be supported. Mentor. Thrive.**

Be part of the ARA Thrive Mentoring Program for women.



**SIGN UP TO BECOME A MENTOR**



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**Save the Date!**  
September 21  
4:30 pm ET