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Advocates for Victims of Sexual and Domestic Violence Call on Senator Nass to Retract Criticism of Anti-Violence Program

Madison—Advocates for victims of sexual and domestic violence are reacting to State Senator Steven Nass's (R-Whitewater) criticism of a UW-Madison program that engages college-aged men in addressing violence against women. His comments come on the heels of earlier misguided remarks aimed at a University class about systemic racism. The advocates are urging Senator Nass to retract his statements.

Violence against women exists at epidemic levels in Wisconsin and nationally. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), a woman in the US is assaulted or beaten every 9 seconds, and domestic violence is most common among women between the ages of 18-24. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 390,000 Wisconsin women have been raped in their lifetimes, and close to one million Wisconsin women have experienced other forms of sexual violence.

End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA) support men taking responsibility to help change the attitudes and beliefs that make rape and battering against women so common.

According to a University website, "a goal for the Men's Project is to ultimately prevent future violence by teaching participants to recognize warning signs of unhealthy interactions." The program also provides insights, "about perceptions of masculinity and how they impact the student experience, including gender-based violence on campus, alcohol, vulnerability, media sexuality, and relationships."

Executive Directors from End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin and WCASA made the following statements regarding Senator Nass's remarks:

"Senator Nass should be praising the efforts of young men to be part of the solution to lead healthier lives and to create a more peaceful state. It is extremely troubling that he is instead threatening the University and trying to score political points. Efforts to prevent men's violence against women are far too important for this kind of political rhetoric," said Patti Seger, Executive Director of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin. "We intend to reach out to Senator Nass to explain why programs like the Men's Project, which promote UW students' work to reduce violence, are so vital, especially to the safety of women and girls in Wisconsin. We will be asking him to retract his statement."

"Senator Nass's recent, concerning comments regarding race, privilege and masculinity illustrate the clear need for greater public understanding of the social norms – attitudes, values and beliefs – in our culture that contribute to sexual violence," stated Pennie Meyers, executive director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA).

"WCASA recently launched '[Social Norms Toolkits](#)' to help communities address these problems and prevent sexual violence," stated Meyers. "We encourage everyone to examine their beliefs and address the norms that support oppression and violence."

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The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA, www.wcasa.org) is a membership agency comprised of organizations and individuals working to end sexual violence in Wisconsin. Among these are the 52 sexual assault service provider agencies throughout the state that offer support, advocacy and information to survivors of sexual assault and their families. WCASA works to ensure that every survivor in Wisconsin gets the support and care they need. WCASA also works to create the social change necessary to ensure a future where no child, woman or man is ever sexually violated again.

End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin: The Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence is the leading voice for victims of domestic abuse in Wisconsin. At End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, we educate shelter and program volunteers and advocates, law enforcement, legislators, and community members to provide safety and support to survivors. We strive to shift Wisconsin from the attitudes and beliefs that cause domestic violence to values of mutual respect and equality, and we partner with communities in the effort to prevent and end domestic abuse. We encourage reporters to include the National Domestic Violence Hotline number [1-800-799-SAFE(7233)] in their stories for victims who need help. A list of local Wisconsin domestic violence victim service providers can be found at <http://www.endabusewi.org>.