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Advocates Applaud Passage of Bills Expanding Domestic Violence Protections

Baton Rouge, Louisiana – The Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV) applauded Tuesday’s final passage of bills expanding domestic violence protections in Louisiana. HB 223 by Representative Helena Moreno and HB 27 by Representative Patrick Connick cleared their final legislative hurdle with Senate passage that sends each to the governor’s desk.

The bills close longstanding loopholes in Louisiana’s domestic violence statutes. HB 223 extends the majority of existing domestic violence protections to dating partners. Previously, dating partners who did not live together or share a child were excluded from the protections provided in the domestic abuse battery law. HB 27 changes the definition of “household member” in Louisiana’s domestic abuse criminal statutes to include cohabiting couples of the same sex. Louisiana is one of only two states whose current law explicitly excludes LGBT victims from these protections. “These changes have been a long time coming,” said Mariah Wineski, Interim Executive Director at LCADV. “A large portion of domestic violence survivors have historically been excluded from the legal protections provided in the criminal code. We applaud today’s legislative victory and look forward to seeing the results of these changes in the field.”

Wineski credits a strong coalition of advocates and supporters for the bills’ success. “Domestic violence is an issue that crosses all social and political boundaries. We are lucky to have a diverse network of people who care deeply about ending domestic violence in our state and are willing to put in the work to see real progress.” The Coalition worked in partnership with several entities to move this legislation through, including the United Way of Southeast Louisiana, various law enforcement and district attorneys’ offices, and local domestic violence advocates across the state.

The bills seek to fix issues in the law that have hindered Louisiana’s domestic violence response for years. According to LCADV, 60% of Louisiana’s intimate partner homicide victims in 2016 were not married to their abusers. Recent high-profile domestic homicides involving couples of the same sex have also brought attention to the disparities in the law. “At the end of the day, these bills will help provide safety for domestic violence victims who currently fall through the cracks.” said Wineski.

The bills were part of a larger package of legislation supported by LCADV. Three bills by Representative John Schroder, HB 499, HB 509, and HB 524, also passed the Senate on Thursday. These bills advance other portions of the Coalition’s legislative agenda, including enhanced protections for victims of stalking and increased penalties for protection order violations. Wineski

praised the progress made this legislative session, “We are grateful for the legislators who are willing to carry these bills and see them through to the end. We have no doubt that these changes will help save lives. It’s a great step forward for our state.”

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The Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV) is a statewide network of programs, organizations, and individuals who share the goal of ending domestic violence in Louisiana. LCADV empowers its members and communities through advocacy, education, resource development, and technical assistance. LCADV is dedicated to bringing about change in our institutions, laws, politics, attitudes, and beliefs which will allow individuals to live free of violence. For more information, visit www.lcadv.org.