



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing on
#ItsOnUs: Combatting Assault on Campus**

April 7, 2022

Good morning, Chairwoman Muth and members of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the It's On Us PA grant program and efforts by the Department of Education to combat sexual violence on college campuses. My name is Dr. Tanya Garcia, and I am the Deputy Secretary and Commissioner for Postsecondary and Higher Education at the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Sexual violence is defined as sexual activity that is unwanted or lacks consent, and refers to a range of physical and non-physical actions.¹ Research suggests that sexual violence impacts a significant number of students in K-12 and higher education. By the age of 17, an estimated 26.6% of females (or 1 in 4) and 5.1% of males (or 1 in 20) have experienced sexual abuse or assault. Their adolescent peers, rather than adults, are the perpetrators in more than half of those offenses.²

In college, about 1 in 5 women experience sexual assault, and women who identify as lesbian, queer, or gay are more likely than heterosexual women to experience sexual assault at college, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.³ A 2019 report based on campus climate surveys from the Association of American Universities found that 26.4% of undergraduate women, 6.9% of undergraduate men, and 23.1% of undergraduate transgender, genderqueer, and nonbinary students experienced sexual assault in college. 41.8% of students reported experiencing sexually harassing behavior; this figure was 65.1% for transgender, genderqueer, and nonbinary students.⁴ LGBTQ+ students are more likely than their peers to experience sexual harassment and violence and are also less likely to report it to authorities.⁵

Across student groups, sexual violence is most likely to occur at certain times of year (in the fall) and early in an undergraduate student's career (at the beginning of their first and second semesters in

¹ "Preventing Sexual Violence | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 5 Feb. 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/fastfact.html>.

² David Finkelhor, Anne Shattuck, Heather A. Turner, & Sherry L. Hamby, "The Lifetime Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Assault Assessed in Late Adolescence", *Journal of Adolescent Health* 55, 3 (2014): 329-333, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.12.026>.

³ Office on Women's Health, "Sexual Assault on College Campuses," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, September 13, 2018, <https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/sexual-assault-and-rape/college-sexual-assault>.

⁴ David Cantor et al., *AAU Campus Climate Survey* (Association of American Universities, 2019), 47, 80, [https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Key-Issues/Campus-Safety/Revised%20Aggregate%20report%20and%20appendices%201-7_\(01-16-2020_FINAL\).pdf](https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Key-Issues/Campus-Safety/Revised%20Aggregate%20report%20and%20appendices%201-7_(01-16-2020_FINAL).pdf)

⁵ Adrienne Green and Alia Wong, "LGBT Students and Campus Sexual Assault," *The Atlantic*, September 22, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/09/campus-sexual-assault-lgbt-students/406684/>.



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college).⁶ In 90% of cases campus sexual violence is committed by someone the victim knows and trusts, such as a friend, classmate, roommate, partner, or other acquaintance.

While many survivors share their experiences with a trusted friend or peer, fewer than 10% of survivors of sexual assault in college report it to officials, such as law enforcement, campus police or public safety, school officials or faculty, or a crisis center or health care center.⁷ Additionally, the long-term impacts for survivors, though varying, are substantial. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, the impacts on a survivor may include, but are not limited to, immense feelings of shame, fear, guilt, and isolation. One may also struggle with fear of contracting a sexually transmitted disease, pregnancy, and the inability to pay for any medical bills. Furthermore, the long-term effects of sexual assault, if left untreated, can include depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.⁸

Experiencing sexual violence should not be part of any student's education.

Launched by Governor Wolf in 2016, It's On Us PA is a statewide campaign that invites education leaders and all Pennsylvanians to be part of the solution to protect students.

The campaign has three major goals:

1. **Improve awareness, prevention, reporting, and response systems** regarding sexual violence in schools, colleges, and universities to better serve all students.
2. **Remove or reduce barriers** that prevent survivors of sexual violence from reporting and/or accessing vital resources by creating a more consistent, empowering reporting process for student survivors of gender-based violence.
3. **Demonstrate significant, proactive, and sustainable leadership** to change institutional culture by challenging Pennsylvania's education leaders – including college and university presidents – as well as students, faculty, staff, families, and communities to pledge to improve their institutions' climate.

The Governor's It's On Us PA Grant Program was established in 2016 to assist colleges with meeting these goals by providing grants of up to \$30,000 to fund initiatives that increase mechanisms and capacity for reporting; improve institutional awareness and training; and improve institutional response to sexual violence. The grant program is competitive, and each year the number of requests exceeds available funds. For this reason, Governor Wolf's 2022-23 budget includes \$1.5 million – a \$500,000 increase – to

⁶ Matthew Kimble, Andrada D. Neacsiu, William F. Flack Jr., & Jessica Horner, "Risk of Unwanted Sex for College Women: Evidence for a Red Zone," *Journal of American College Health* 57, 3 (2008), <https://www.middlebury.edu/media/view/424768/original/2008.kimble.uws.pdf>.

⁷ Bonnie S. Fisher et al., *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, 2000, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/182369.pdf>.

⁸ "About Sexual Assault." National Sexual Violence Resource Center, <https://www.nsvrc.org/about-sexual-assault>.



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expand resources and awareness to promote healthy relationships, strengthen protections for victims, and provide safe learning environments for students and staff.⁹

Since 2016, the It's On Us PA Grant Program has awarded a total of 225 grants totaling nearly \$6 million to postsecondary institutions, including public and private 2- and 4-year colleges and universities and postsecondary career and trade schools. For the 2021-22 school year, 34 colleges and universities received nearly \$1 million through It's On Us PA.

Program Year	Applications Received	Applications Funded
<i>2016-2017</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>2017-2018</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>2018-2019</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>2019-2020</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>2020-2021</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>2021-2022</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>330</i>	<i>225</i>

Below are examples of how grantees have used It's On Us PA grants:

- Anonymous reporting system implementation or improvement.
- Bystander awareness training.
- Title IX training to faculty, staff, and students.
- Targeted sexual assault awareness/prevention training for student athletes.
- Albright College, Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, and Manor College created It's On Us videos that are played throughout their campuses and on their websites.
- Lehigh University and Millersville University offered trauma-informed yoga classes for students.
- Bloomsburg University and Manor College offered self-defense classes to students.
- Chatham University invited Don McPherson, a former NFL and CFL quarterback, to speak on the topic of aspirational masculinity through a virtual event, "You Throw Like A Girl."
- Community College of Allegheny County created educational/awareness training and with the perspective of students under the age of 18 to provide training to those who participated in dual enrollment courses.

⁹ Prior to COVID-19, demand exceeded available funding. Due to the pandemic, some programming had to be cancelled or quickly adapted for online delivery. The Department anticipates an increase in applications for 2022-2023 based on feedback from the postsecondary community and colleges resuming in-person instruction.



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- Immaculata University partnered with Mazzoni Center to provide training to employees to implement programs that inspire affirmation and inclusion.
- Penn State University translated their It's On Us video into six languages (Arabic, Mandarin, Korean, Spanish, French, Malay) along with translating intake documents.

In the past month, I have visited five campuses that have received It's On Us PA grants. Some highlights include:

- The First Lady and I went to Cheney University of Pennsylvania, part of the State System of Higher Education, where we learned about their Title IX Ambassador Program as well as Zero Shades of Grey, their sexual harassment programming conducted every semester.
- At Seton Hill University, we learned about a student-led theater production of *Jane Doe*, based on the Steubenville rape case. In addition, the university has formally partnered with the Blackburn Center to create Setonians Advocating for Gender Equity, or SAGE.
- Both Gettysburg College and York College of Pennsylvania are working with their local high schools to boost those students' awareness about preventing sexual assault and sexual violence.
- And Juniata College has transformed their campus culture to promote healthy relationships with training and programming for students, staff, and administrators.

A key component of successful awareness and prevention programs is partnership development, which has been steadily increasing over the past six years. Grantees are engaging with community agencies to provide programming, counseling, victim services and more. Below are two examples of partnerships established as a result of It's On Us PA:

- Point Park University partnered with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center for afterhours student crisis support through the 2019-20 grant year and continued this partnership into the 2020-21 year.
- Saint Joseph's University partnered with Laurel House, Victim Services Center of Montgomery County, Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence, Philadelphia Sexual Assault Response Center, and Women against Abuse in a program called "Permission Slip" that enables students to complete a permission slip consent form to receive outreach and support from community partners following an experience of sexual misconduct.

To evolve the development of community partnerships, this year the Department encouraged applicants to partner or collaborate with K-12 schools or programs that benefit or target K-12 students in addition to their college communities.

This past fall, [Gov. Wolf unveiled a four-bill package](#) that will further strengthen protections for students and combat sexual violence on campuses. The package includes a "yes means yes" law that requires all postsecondary institutions to have policies with clear standards of what is and is not consent; additional



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protections for victims of on-campus crime; a plan to teach middle and high school students to recognize and prevent dating violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment and stalking; and establishing a task force to study sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking in grades 6-12 and postsecondary institutions. Senate Bill 730, sponsored by Senator Cappelletti, and House Bill 1489, sponsored by Representative Simms would both assist in making these policies clear at postsecondary institutions. Other bills such as Senate Bill 909, sponsored by Senator Santarsiero, and House Bill 1699, sponsored by Representative Boback would create and provide protective accommodations and measures for victims of sexual violence.

We should all be extremely proud of all It's On Us PA grant recipients and the incredible work that the colleges and their students have done to create safe spaces free from sexual assault and violence. Pennsylvania has been the first state to implement this honorable and crucial program state-wide. None of this would have been possible without the bold and courageous leadership of the Governor and General Assembly. Still, there is more work to be done. Sexual violence is preventable, and we need continued partnership to pass legislation that would further create and foster protective spaces, establish healthy relationship norms, and support victims. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter of societal importance.