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NCAVP SUPPORTS LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUEER (LGBTQ) INCLUSION IN HATE VIOLENCE LEGISLATION; URGES CONGRESS TO TAKE MORE ACTION TO END SYSTEMIC BIAS.

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), a national coalition of over 35 member anti-violence programs, supports the passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. When signed by President Obama, this legislation will send a clear message that society abhors hate crimes based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, race, religion, national origin or disability. However, Congress must do more to end hate violence by emphasizing anti-LGBTQ violence education and prevention, and by addressing systemic biases in the criminal legal system.

Hate crimes are “message” crimes: the perpetrator hopes to send a message to all communities that the victim represents that, “you are not safe or wanted here and you will not be tolerated or respected here.” Because of the dual nature of hate violence, NCAVP members work not only with thousands of individual LGBTQ victims or survivors and their families every year, but also with communities, to restore safety and hope to their lives. NCAVP organizations also engage in prevention efforts, providing hundreds of workshops to individuals, organizations, healthcare providers and schools on LGBTQ-related violence issues.

“In 2008, we saw the highest reported number of LGBTQ hate-motivated murders since 1999. We know first-hand the impact that hate violence has on survivors, their friends and families and the LGBTQ communities that hate violence targets,” said Rebecca Waggoner-Kloek of OutFront Minnesota, “This legislation will finally expand federal law to include LGBTQ people.” As a national coalition, NCAVP member organizations have seen that an incident of anti-LGBTQ violence threatens the sense of safety of all LGBTQ communities by contributing to an increased awareness of

vulnerability to targeting on local, regional, and systemic levels. For the first time nationally, the Hate Crimes Prevention Act makes a strong statement that violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people is categorically unacceptable.

At the same time that the Hate Crimes Prevention Act sends this clear and necessary message, NCAVP is deeply concerned by the potential continuation of institutional bias through this legislation. NCAVP members are keenly aware that certain groups - especially poor people, transgender people, African-American and other men of color - are far more likely to be arrested and prosecuted for violent crimes (including hate crimes) than are white non-transgender men or non-transgender women of any race. These traditionally marginalized communities are among those most targeted by hate violence in the first place. Furthermore, many of the bias violence incidents against members of LGBTQ communities are not often reported, classified or prosecuted as hate crimes, in part because of this institutional discrimination. Additionally, it is worth noting that because the Act was attached to defense spending, its passage unfortunately required support for militarization, a process which perpetuates anti-LGBTQ and other biases at home and abroad.

In order to substantively alter these trends, NCAVP member organizations call for Congress to fund community-based prevention and education initiatives and support emerging and existing LGBTQ anti-violence programs in every region. “We further urge that the federal government prioritize public education and training of first responders and law enforcement around not just LGBTQ issues, but also systemic institutional biases,” Ann Verdine-Lewis of the Virginia Anti-Violence Project said, “As a society, we need to systematically end violence against *all* people and transform a culture of hate into a culture of equality.”

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) addresses the pervasive problem of violence committed against and within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) and HIV-affected communities. NCAVP is a coalition of programs that document and advocate for victims of anti-LGBTQ and anti-HIV/AIDS violence/harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, police misconduct and other forms of victimization. NCAVP is dedicated to creating a national response to the violence plaguing these communities. Further, NCAVP supports existing anti-violence organizations and emerging local programs in their efforts to document and prevent such violence. NCAVP is a program of the New York City Anti-Violence Project.