# *VAWA: Congressional Black Caucus Calls for End to ‘Overly Aggressive Policing’*

In our previous messages, the Coalition to End Domestic Violence has highlighted the need to refocus the Violence Against Women Act to give greater attention to the provision of mental health services to address alcohol abuse, childhood trauma, and the like:

1. 57% of women believe the Violence Against Women Act “should create a system in which mental health services are used first, and criminal justice approaches reserved for the more severe or repeated cases of domestic violence.” <http://endtodv.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/YouGov-Survey-VAWA.xlsx>
2. 46 state abuse coalitions have signed a statement saying, “We have invested significantly in the criminal legal system, despite knowing that the vast majority of survivors choose not to engage with it, and that those who do are often re-traumatized by it.” <https://www.endabusewi.org/moment-of-truth/>

One of the key issues of the Congressional Black Caucus is Criminal Justice Reform. The CBC highlights the problem of “overly aggressive policing practices” as a cause of the “mass incarceration that plagues Black communities.” <https://cbc.house.gov/issues/issue/?IssueID=14891>

These “overly aggressive policing practices” refer to the mandatory arrest policies spawned by the Violence Against Women Act. The original VAWA law stated:

“To implement mandatory arrest or pro-arrest programs and policies in police departments, including mandatory arrest programs and policies for protection order violations.”

The 2005 VAWA reauthorization changed the wording to “pro-arrest,” but police departments did not soften their policies.

Mandatory arrest policies have a devastating effect on Black communities:

* Loss of wage-earners
* Dissolution of marriages and relationships
* Epidemic of fatherlessness and the resulting social problems

According to the Centers for Disease Control, each year Black men are more likely than Black women to be victims of sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS-StateReportBook.pdf>

But law enforcement efforts consistently target Black men. According to the CBC, “African-American men are incarcerated at more than six times the rate of White men.”

*The targeting of Black men is unacceptable, and must be brought to an end.*

The VAWA reauthorization needs to include a provision requiring that VAWA law enforcement grantees enact arrest policies that are based on constitutional notions of “probable cause,” not “When in doubt, make the arrest.”

