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**Statement of the Honorable Alcee L. Hastings**  
**On Recognizing October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month**  
**November 1, 2011**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alcee L. Hastings". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned over the title of the statement.

M. Speaker, I rise today to recognize October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. In 1989, Congress designated October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month in order to raise awareness about the tragic social ill that is domestic violence, and to help bring attention to the efforts of those who are working to end it. Today, victims of domestic violence in the United States are more likely to report their situation to the authorities than they were three decades ago, and the number of fatal and non-fatal cases of domestic violence has declined significantly. The efforts of nonprofit organizations, such as the YWCA Harmony House located in my Congressional district, have assisted millions of victims of domestic abuse in making the best possible choices for their life and well-being.

While the number of domestic violence cases has indeed declined in the last few years, there are still millions of people experiencing some type of domestic abuse each year in the United States. An overwhelming number of these victims are women, who in many cases suffer in silence instead of seeking help. Sadly, victims often completely isolate themselves out of fear and shame of their abuse.

M. Speaker, it is estimated that one in four women in the United States will experience domestic violence during their lifetime. Women between the ages of 20 to 24 are the largest group of non-fatal abuse victims, while women under 24 suffer from the highest rates of rape and sexual abuse. Furthermore, women living in households at the lowest income level experience six times the rate of domestic abuse.

Domestic violence, however, is by no means limited to any one group. Due to numerous factors, including social stigma, many male victims of domestic abuse tend to remain silent. In addition, domestic abuse occurs in approximately 30 to 40 percent of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) relationships, contrary to the misconception that domestic abuse only affects certain individuals.

Young children who live in homes where spousal abuse takes place are also often victims of abuse themselves. In fact, it is estimated that 30 to 60 percent of people who take part in domestic violence against their partners also abuse children in their household. Sadly, some of these children grow up to be abusers themselves.

In 1994, I voted in favor of the *Violence Against Women Act*, historic legislation that established new criminal and civil enforcement resources to hold abusers accountable for their actions, while introducing tools to help victims seek justice. Additionally, as part of the *Affordable Care Act*, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced new guidelines that will ensure women receive preventive health services without additional cost, including domestic violence screening and counseling. Under the *Affordable Care Act*, insurance companies can no longer classify domestic violence as a pre-existing condition.

Last year, I also voted in favor of reauthorizing the *Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act*, which gives communities life-saving tools to help identify and treat child abuse or neglect. It also supports shelters, service programs, and the National Domestic Violence Hotline, providing victims with the critical resources they need.

M. Speaker, victims of domestic abuse should know that they are not alone. There are countless organizations all over this nation who stand ready to help them. In Congress, I will continue to do everything in my power to speak out against domestic violence and ensure that our laws protect the well-being of all Americans.