



DC Rape Crisis Center (DCRCC)
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Powering A Culture of Consent, Indira Henard, DCRCC Director of Advocacy Testifies at D.C. Council Revenge Porn Hearing; *D.C. Council Considers Legislation, Bills 20-762 & 20-903, to Criminalize Revenge Porn.*

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — DC Rape Crisis Center (DCRCC)'s Indira Henard, Director of Advocacy, testified today at a D.C. Council hearing to Combat Revenge Porn. The DC Council heard testimony on Bill 20-762 "The Relationship Privacy Act of 2014" and Bill 20-903 "Criminalization of Non-Consensual Pornography Amendment of 2014", both before the D.C. Council to consider criminalizing what is known as "revenge porn".

"Revenge porn" is the posting of nude or sexually explicit photographs or videos of people online without their consent, even if the photograph itself was taken with consent. A spouse or ex may get revenge by uploading photographs to websites, many of which are set up specifically for these kinds of photos or videos. The victim's name, address and links to social media profiles are often included with the images, and some websites charge a fee to have the materials removed. – National Conference on State Legislatures

"Revenge porn," non-consensual pornography is the dissemination of sexually explicit images on the internet, among other places, against the will of those depicted.

Introduced by Councilmembers Muriel Bowser and Mary Cheh, the D.C. Council heard testimony on revenge porn joining thirteen other states to have recently moved towards passing legislation to criminalize revenge porn.

Advocates for revenge porn victims argue that revenge porn is a form of sexual harassment and an invasion of privacy that should be criminalized. Victims of domestic violence are often threatened with these images as a means to keep the victims in abusive relationships. Human traffickers use the threat of publicizing videos of girls and women that were filmed under threats of violence as a means of keeping the victims from going to the authorities. Some of these images were at one time voluntarily provided among consenting adults, but were later posted to websites which host “revenge porn.” There have been suicides, loss of jobs and sexual assaults as a result. There are currently no laws in Washington, DC to explicitly outlaw this.

The two provocative bills, 20-762 and 20-903 will make revenge porn a crime punishable by up to 5 years in prison.

DCRCC’s Director of Advocacy, Indira Henard, testified on behalf of victims of revenge porn in an effort to influence the D.C. Council to pass both bills. “This legislation is rooted in the ethic of consent. Survivors understand that when it comes to sexual acts, consent is non-negotiable - there is no room for gray”. Autonomy of body and person is paramount.”

“It is on the spectrum of harassment, stalking and domestic violence.” Additionally, Henard addresses victim blaming, “... survivors of crime do not have an obligation to accept dual responsibility of that crime. The community has a responsibility to hold perpetrators and accomplices who aid and support the distribution of these images accountable and responsible. As DCRCC works towards empowering a culture of consent, we value choice, we value privacy and we value consent as it relates to all sexual acts and the potential digital recordings used in sexual acts. We strongly urge the D.C. Council to support bills 20-706 and 20-903”.

Among other witnesses at the hearing included DCRCC partners DC Coalition against Domestic Violence (DCCADV), Network for Victim Recovery of DC (NVRDC), Anne Franks, law professor at the University of Miami and the Vice President for the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative, a group of advocates to end revenge porn.

About DC Rape Crisis Center

Since 1972, DC Rape Crisis Center has been making a significant contribution to the health, economic, social and cultural well-being of Washington, DC. Dedicated to creating a world free of sexual violence through conscience and action, DCRCC’s call to action obliges us to us to build the capacity of the Washington, DC community to respond to survivors of sexual assault with compassion, dignity and respect, regardless of race, class, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, immigration status, ability, age or religious affiliation. In addition to prevention activities, DC Rape Crisis Center programs ensure the provision of crisis intervention services for adult and child survivors of sexual assault –helping to eliminate the long term effects that rape can have on the well – being and health of an individual. For more information about DC Rape Crisis Center, please visit www.dcrcc.org.

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