



Senator Bob Wieckowski

Recently a high school journalist asked me about the #MeToo movement and some of the steps that should be taken to prevent future harassment and assault of victims. After outlining changes undertaken in the Legislature, I emphasized the need, especially for men, to set a good example at home and by calling out unacceptable remarks and behavior. Creating a supportive environment based on respect for others, and setting a positive example for children, can prevent inappropriate behavior.

Unfortunately, too many men were never taught how to manage their emotions and lash out at those around them, including family members or their partners. Bullying, harassing and abusing others is unacceptable behavior whether it occurs in the workplace or at home.

Domestic violence brings horror into homes, terrorizes families, including children, and disrupts the daily lives of people from all walks of life. Domestic violence does not discriminate. It does not care about your race, your ethnic background, where you live or how much money you make. It is an equal opportunity offender. Its best friend is silence. Silence allows it to continue and to strike at any time. Survivors cannot afford to be silent and we cannot afford to ignore their pleas for help.

Funding more resources to prevent domestic violence will lead us closer to a day when more families can live in peace and in a safe environment.

As a state legislator, I have successfully authored legislation, supported by the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, to ensure the safety of DV and child sexual abuse victims in custody disputes, and to help protect survivors from having to pay spousal support to someone who pleaded no contest to domestic violence during a plea bargain. I am also proud to have fought for increased funding for our legal aid providers who also provide so much assistance to domestic violence survivors.



Engaging Men & Boys

Partnering with the legal aid community, I helped lead the effort to provide the first increases to the state's Equal Access Fund. With these additional funds, some legal aid providers expanded domestic violence prevention services to disadvantaged communities and installed hotlines in multiple languages to increase access.

Many victims are afraid to reveal the violent details of their private lives and abusers prey on this fear. One tool they use is the threat of cyber retaliation – posting intimate images of the victims online if they speak out or seek help from law enforcement or a shelter. In this digital age when almost everyone has a cell phone and a social media account, this threat is real.

That is why I worked with cyber civil rights attorneys and law enforcement to successfully author two bills allowing victims to take legal action using a pseudonym in all court documentation and proceedings in cyber retaliation cases. My first bill, AB 2643, approved in 2014, created a private right of action to bring civil liability to an abuser for the non-consensual and intentional distribution of intimate images where the victim had a reasonable expectation of privacy. My second bill, SB 157, strengthened the privacy protections by excluding or redacting all online identifiers of the victim, including social media profiles, email addresses, IP addresses, usernames and telephone numbers.

These laws ensure that victims will not be re-victimized when they take legal action against their abusers. California, and the Bay Area especially, thrives on diversity. But if service providers are not culturally aware and do not have staff that speak multiple languages, this diversity can make victims feel more trapped and alone, not knowing where to turn for assistance. Fortunately, our region has access to capable and compassionate organizations with trained domestic violence prevention professionals. I have honored some of them before, including Safe Alternatives to Violent Environments and Ruby's Place.

On May 10, at 3:30 p.m. in Fremont's Warms Springs Community Center, 47300 Fernald Street, I will present an API Heritage Leadership Award to Maitri for its tremendous work to prevent domestic violence and trafficking. This 8th Annual Ceremony is free and open to the public. Attendees can RSVP by contacting my district office at 510-794-3900 or emailing senator.wieckowski@senate.ca.gov.

With its comprehensive services to the South Asian community and people suffering from domestic violence, cultural alienation, human trafficking and emotional abuse, Maitri provides a vital service for those in need.

California has worked hard to spread the word about domestic violence, and to raise awareness of teen dating violence to educate people and better protect the next generation. The best long-term solution is to make the investments at the local level so help is available and accessible and can put people on the path to healing.

Maitri is an invaluable ally bringing peace and comfort to the lives of local residents.

--State Senator Bob Wieckowski (D-Fremont) represents the 10th District, covering parts of Alameda and Santa Clara counties. He was elected to the state Legislature in 2010 and has served in the Senate since 2014. Senator Wieckowski serves on the Judiciary Committee and is a strong advocate for domestic violence prevention, and a legislative leader on access to justice issues. He graduated from the University of California, Berkeley and Santa Clara University Law School.