



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **IN THE WAKE OF #METOO, COLORADO SENATE FAILS TO MEANINGFULLY ADDRESS SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

**DENVER, CO** - We are deeply disappointed by elected officials' unwillingness to address sexual misconduct in any form, especially those in leadership positions, over the past several months. Despite the numerous credible findings of sexual harassment in the Senate, there has been little to no meaningful accountability for offenders. The expulsion of Representative Lebsack in the House is not nearly enough to address the culture of sexual harassment at our Capitol and beyond. From the Statehouse to schoolhouse, members of the Colorado General Assembly continued to defend practices, policies, and systems that perpetuate sexual misconduct and sexual violence.

HB 1391, addressing Sexual Misconduct in Higher Education, provided an opportunity to strengthen protections for victims, send a clear message that Colorado values fair and equitable procedures, and protect all students' rights to a safe and meaningful education. However, this legislation was sabotaged through the addition of amendments that essentially turned the bill on its head. It was ultimately killed on a party line vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee on the premise of a \$5,000 fiscal note, sending the message that our elected officials are unwilling to spend 1 cent per student to address campus sexual assault.

The Legislature is also willing to lessen accountability for those who have been found guilty of committing sexual crimes, exemplified by HB 1427 Sex Offender Management Board Interest Conflicts, which was hurried through, without stakeholder input, and passed on the last day of session. By eliminating board members who are directly involved in working with and treating victims and offenders, HB 1427 removes vital expertise that is critical to holding offenders accountable and keeping victims and communities safe.

We, as a society, cannot expect or demand that victims report, unless we are willing to support practices that make it safe for victims to come forward, provide a fair and balanced process for examining what occurred, and hold individuals accountable when they are found to have committed offenses.

In a period when addressing sexual violence has taken a national stage, and when 1 in 2 women and 1 in 4 men in Colorado have experienced sexually violent crimes in their lifetime, it is beyond time that we start treating sexual violence as a crisis, instead of minimizing and ignoring survivors. Epidemics, like this, affect everyone regardless of party affiliation, and elected officials need to treat this as a bipartisan issue.

“Colorado deserves more from our elected officials. Survivors deserve more,” said Brie Franklin, CCASA’s Executive Director. “We hope that the next time survivors and subject matter experts ask for meaningful change, the General Assembly will listen. CCASA, survivors, and countless Coloradans are watching, and will continue to fight for what is right.”

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**CCASA interviews available upon request**