May 14, 2020

Senator Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein,

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) would like to express its strong support for Senate Resolution 360, which recognizes and supports the goals and ideals of National Sexual Assault Awareness Prevention Month. The EDC is particularly supportive of the recognition that sexual assault is often associated with the development of an eating disorder, along with numerous other adverse consequences for the victim.

The EDC is a national coalition of advocates, providers, parents, industry professionals, researchers, and others who share the common goal of advancing the recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority throughout the United States.

Eating disorders affect over 30 million Americans during their lifetime, including over 1.2 million Californians, and have the second highest mortality rate out of any psychiatric condition, only second to opioid use disorder. The relationship between eating disorders and sexual trauma has been well-established in the relevant academic literature. Results from a number of longitudinal studies have demonstrated that women affected by an eating disorder are associated with an increased prevalence of sexual trauma, and that sexual trauma is linked to several different types of eating disorder symptoms. These studies also report that sexual trauma precedes the onset of an eating disorder for the majority of women who have experienced both sexual assault and an eating disorder.

The link between childhood sexual trauma and the development of an eating disorder has been proven in a number of research studies. One study reports that women affected by an eating disorder show a prevalence of childhood sexual trauma more than twice that of women unaffected by an eating disorder. These findings have held true in studies focused on particular eating disorders, and other studies have demonstrated that women affected by an eating disorder are more likely to experience both sexual trauma and eating disorders.

Similarly, there is a strong relationship between early adult sexual assault and eating disorders, which should be noted in light of the fact that female college students are especially at-risk for sexual

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It has been shown that disordered eating is closely associated with sexual assault among female students, and that the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms and depressive symptoms that result from a sexual assault fully mediate the relationship between early adult sexual assault and disordered eating. This relationship remained statistically significant even when childhood sexual victimization was correlated and taken into account.

The EDC appreciates Senator Feinstein’s leadership in raising awareness for sexual assault, and highlighting the serious psychological impacts of sexual assault. We look forward to working with your office on this issue in the future and benefiting from one another’s expertise.

Sincerely,

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

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