



**Testimony in Support of**  
**[Uplifting Victims and Immigrant Safety Act \(U-VISA\)](#)**

Montgomery County NOW thanks Councilmembers Evan Glass, Natali Fani-González and Dawn Luedtke for introducing this important bill that will provide legal protected status for noncitizen victims of violent crime and/or those helping to solve violent crimes.

I now lead the Montgomery County MD Chapter of the National Organization for Women (MCMDNOW), an advocacy group that seeks to protect women's rights. One of our core issues is eliminating violence against women. I have also volunteered as a sexual assault outreach volunteer with VASAP (Victims Assistance and Sexual Assault Program), as a victim advocate in the District Court's domestic violence court, and served many years on the then Montgomery County Human Trafficking Task Force. I know from these experiences that sexual assault, human trafficking and domestic violence are problems in this County, and victims who happen to be undocumented are wary of reporting their crimes for fear of being arrested or deported. In all capacities, we have tried to reassure noncitizen victims that our County will protect them; but with the recent anti-immigration rhetoric and threats to immigrants by the incoming President of the United States and supporters, those reassurances may now be even more difficult for noncitizen victims to believe and trust.

Having the U-VISA in place, with a PR campaign to get the word out, will help those who have become victims of or who can help solve violent crimes to know that they will be protected when they come forward to report the crime or help bring justice. It could help keep them and others safe from further harm. We must do what we can to eliminate violence against women and all people, and not risk their also being sent to a country where they will be in danger of even more violence.

Montgomery County NOW supports this bill, so that no matter what happens at the federal level, our County can protect its noncitizen crime victims. We hope you will vote for the U-VISA Act and get it in place very soon.

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