

PREPARED TESTIMONY of Amanda Nguyen
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Implementation of the Survivors' Bill of Rights Act and Next Steps

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Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Feinstein, and Distinguished Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today to discuss the Sexual Assault Survivors' Bill of Rights Act.

My name is Amanda Nguyen. On the day that I was raped, I never could have imagined that a greater injustice awaited me than the one I had already been forced to endure. As a child, I had learned to believe in the well-worn credos of our legal system—that we all had access to justice, that our civil rights were sacrosanct, and that everyone was equal under law. But in the wake of my assault, I came to understand just how hollow those words can feel to a survivor seeking justice and compassion.

In the course of pursuing my own case, I ran into roadblock after roadblock—and discovered that my path was all too familiar to millions of Americans. Rape kits destroyed before they could be brought forth as evidence. Copies of vital medical records and police reports denied. Shortfalls and irregularities in every state; symptoms of a broken promise that has left far too many survivors—already reeling from one betrayal—feeling powerless, invisible, betrayed for a second time.

I refused to be invisible—so I charted a new path. I rewrote the law, working with you, members of Congress, to draft a Sexual Assault Survivors' Bill of Rights. The Bill would earn the distinction of being one of the few pieces of legislation passed unanimously by Congress in recent memory. More importantly, it codified a set of basic, comprehensive civil rights for more than 25 million rape survivors across the country.

Though I never imagined the challenges I would face after my assault, nor did I imagine the power, the progress, and the hope that would arise from my ordeal. I created a non-profit called Rise to teach other survivors how to pen their own rights into existence—and to carry our success in Congress out into the fifty states, where most rape cases are adjudicated. To date, our team has worked with local survivors to secure the passage of 18 laws, with more on the way. Because most rape cases are adjudicated in state courts it is necessary for these rights to be passed on to state by state level in the United States. I ask each of you sitting here today to help bring these civil rights to your own communities and to your own states where survivors need it

still. I ask that you realize your position of privilege and power and that the work does not stop here in the United States Congress. I ask that you understand the incredible movement we have created together and that through our shared common humanity we can make a difference across not only America, but also, the world.

Though it was the American promise of equal justice that Rise first sought to fulfill, the truth is that this challenge is global. Sexual violence is an epidemic from which no nation is immune; it is exacerbated by inequitable laws, by familiar stigmas, and by the silence of leaders on the world stage. Rise has already worked with partners in Japan to pass rape survivor reform laws, and more countries are set to follow suit. But for most survivors, whether they're in Dakar, Delhi, or Des Moines, this is still a struggle they are forced to endure alone—as invisible and powerless as I once was.

Yesterday, I had the incredible honor of being formally nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. When most people think about peace, the work that my team is engaged in may not be the first thing that comes to mind. But the truth is for the estimated 35 percent of women on Earth who are survivors of sexual violence, access to justice is a necessary prerequisite to true peace. Their lives are the invisible war zones that corrode human potential and hold back the promise of a just world. Their powerlessness is our shame.

This is a peace that we all - Senator, citizen, advocate from any corner of the globe - can help deliver. We can hold a light up to this darkest corner of human experience, and allow survivors at last to be seen, to be heard, to be believed, to be empowered. I have authored a first-of-its-kind, worldwide resolution on the rights of sexual assault survivors, which I intend to bring before the United Nations General Assembly. Its central tenets are the same as those I first laid out in the aftermath of my own rape: that justice should not depend on geography; that every human being deserves the opportunity to be heard.

We can make justice and peace for survivors of sexual violence a meaningful global priority, just as we have begun to make it a priority here at home. What higher cause could we all serve than to call the world to action to put power back into the hands of rape survivors—people who have been disempowered by horrific acts of violence? The movement I represent here today is one that draws from our core national values: democracy, equality, and, most of all, hope. I am grateful that this Congress has been united in support of our work. And it is my hope that we can now unite the world by educating and inspiring people everywhere, both at home here in America state by state and around the globe, to chart paths to power of their own.

Thank you.