Speaker, I include in the RECORD the following:

Good morning, Congresspersons Kuster, Speier, Meehan and Joyce. Thank you for inviting me to participate in this important roundtable before the Bipartisan Task Force to End Sexual Violence. My name is Amy Sanchez and I am the CEO of Break the Cycle, a national nonprofit that engages, educates and empowers youth to build lives and communities free from domestic and dating violence. Break the Cycle believes that everyone deserves a healthy relationship and since 1996 has worked to end dating abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking in the lives of young people ages 12 to 24 across the U.S. Thank you for holding this roundtable today to address the steps Congress can take to support the implementation of $5 million in funding set by the CDC to reduce intimate partner violence and consent education, and to thank you each for being champions for ending sexual violence.

Dating abuse and sexual violence are public health epidemics with severe impacts for young victims:

One in three high school students experience either physical or sexual violence, or both, perpetrated by someone they are dating or going out with. Nearly 30 percent of adult victims of interpersonal violence homicides from 2003 to 2014 were young women between the ages of 18 and 29. (Unfortunately this CDC study did not address risk factors higher than 18.) In Texas alone, 8 young women 19 and younger were murdered by an intimate partner among young people. To that end, Break the Cycle’s work focuses on three: 1) direct legal representation to young victims ages 12 to 24 in Washington, DC, in restraining order, Title IX, and victim witness advocacy cases; 2) supporting youth leadership on dating abuse issues in schools and communities; and 3) providing education programs to schools and other community entities on supporting young people to prevent dating abuse and sexual assault. My remaining remarks will address the third element of this work—prevention education—and how we can ensure that every K through 12 student in the U.S. has access to developmentally appropriate programming.

Break the Cycle’s prevention programming takes many forms, including Healthy Relationships workshops, Resource Manuals for schoolteachers and administrators, and Real Talk. The goal is to create a space for youth to engage in open and honest conversations about healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviors in order to decrease the number of young victims so often feel:

- unable young people to lead conversations about the good, the bad, and the normal in dating and relationships today;
- teach young people how to best provide support to each other since we know they often do not report dating/sexual abuse to an adult;
- allow young people to talk without fear of being judged or bullied;
- educate young people about dating abuse, including its warning signs; and build on the lived realities of young people to develop impactful strategies to end dating violence and create a culture without abuse.

To prevent dating abuse and sexual violence among young people, Congress must fund primary prevention in every school. The funded approaches should meet the best practices standards by including that the education be: comprehensive; offered in sufficient dosage; socio-culturally relevant; evidence-based; offered with well-trained implementing evaluators; and employ varied teaching methods.

One cannot check social media or news outlets today without reading about another sexual assault case, including on our school campuses. School districts are waking up to the fact that primary prevention programs are needed to teach young people about healthy and unhealthy relationship patterns and what consent means. Many states, including Virginia, Florida, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Ohio, Oregon, and Rhode Island, are leading the way by requiring that schools include consent and healthy relationships education within their sexual education curricula.

Budget choices are policy choices, and Congress has the opportunity to support these state efforts through adequate funding. One such avenue is the $5 million increase for Rape Prevention Education in the Senate Appropriations Bill—should this champion this increase in RPE in the House as a concrete step towards ending dating abuse and sexual assault.

I want to close with some words from the sister of a dating abuse survivor who Break the Cycle assisted. She wrote BTC: “I had not thought about the need for interventions for young people. But then when my sister needed help, you were there for her. I will never be able to thank you enough for what you did for her. She has since met an amazing man and will be married soon. I doubt she will tell you, but you will be there nonetheless—in the form of a safe and whole bride walking into the arms of a man who loves and respects her.” Through adequate funding and mandates for healthy relationships and consent education in K through 12 schools, Congress can be instrumental in preventing dating violence and sexual assault and ensuring that love and respect are the touchstones of relationships that young people form throughout their lives.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BILLY LONG
OF MISSOURI
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, October 31, 2017

Mr. LONG. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, September 26, 2017, Wednesday, September 27, 2017, Thursday, September 28, 2017, Monday, October 2, 2017, Tuesday, October 3, 2017, and Wednesday, October 4, 2017, I was unable to vote on any legislative measures due to a foot injury. Had I been present, I would have voted the following:

(Roll no. 532) On ordering the previous question providing for consideration of H.R. 2824—Increasing Opportunity and Success for Children and Parents through Evidence-Based Home Visiting Act of 2017, had I been present I would have voted yes.

(Roll no. 533) On adoption of the rule providing for consideration of H.R. 2824—Increasing Opportunity and Success for Children and Parents through Evidence-Based Home Visiting Act, and H.R. 2792—Control Unlawful Fugitive Felons Act of 2017, had I been present I would have voted yes.