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Subject: CORRECTION: Leader Book, Rep. Bartleman Introduce "Gabby Petito Act" to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence
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*****Clarification: A previous version of this press release included a typo in the headline. This version corrects that.*****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senate Democratic Leader Lauren Book and Representative Robin Bartleman Introduce “Gabby Petito Act” to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence

WESTON, Fla. – Today, [Senate Democratic Leader Lauren Book \(D-Davie\)](#) and [Representative Robin Bartleman \(D-Weston\)](#) filed a bill, [SB 610](#) and [HB 673](#) in response to [the tragic and preventable death of Gabby Petito](#) from domestic violence while on a cross-country van trip taken with her boyfriend. This initiative, brought to Senator Book by Gabby’s father, **Joe Petito** of Vero Beach, is centered on strengthening domestic violence prevention efforts in Florida – mandating law enforcement to conduct a lethality assessment on survivors, fostering enhanced collaboration between advocates and law enforcement throughout the state.

“United as a family, we stand together in support of this legislative bill against domestic violence, advocating for justice, protection, and a brighter future for all,” says **Joe Petito**.

“Domestic violence is a horrific crime hiding in plain sight, affecting 20 people in the United States every single minute of every single day – all too often, with deadly consequences. Each one of us knows victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, even if we do not realize it,” says **Senate Democratic Leader Lauren Book**. “That’s why we are working to honor Gabby Petito’s life through meaningful action, protecting the lives of other victims and survivors before it’s too late, so that we can keep people safe in ways Gabby was not. It is absolutely possible, and it begins with the Gabby Petito Act.”

“As a mother of a daughter the same age as Gabby, the sheer horror of her disappearance and the heartbreaking revelation that her murder was a result of domestic violence left me in tears,” says **Representative Robin Bartleman**.

“Thousands of domestic violence cases go unreported each year as many victims are paralyzed with fear so it is imperative that when 911 calls and reports are made that we give law enforcement officers the tools needed to protect victims like Gabby. This legislation is a lifeline for those in peril.”

This comprehensive bill mandates law enforcement officers to complete a lethality assessment form during domestic violence investigations. The evidence-based tool, approved by the US Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women, is designed to evaluate the potential for serious injury or death. By emphasizing early intervention, the legislation seeks to create a proactive approach to domestic violence cases. The bill also places a mandate on the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to collaborate with the Florida Sheriffs Association, Florida Police Chiefs Association, and domestic violence advocacy organizations to develop policies, procedures, and training programs for the effective implementation of lethality assessments.

According to the FDLE, there were 106,615 DV offenses reported to law enforcement in Florida in 2020. There were 198 domestic violence homicides and 19 domestic violence manslaughter offenses reported to law enforcement. Domestic violence homicides can be prevented.

The proposed legislation is shaped and supported by Gabby's father and advocates across the state, including:

Linda L. Parker, Ph.D., President/CEO, Women In Distress of Broward County, Inc.: “I firmly believe this bill will change the way Domestic Violence is screened in Florida, and will save lives by identifying high lethality cases right from the beginning. This bill gives Florida Law enforcement the tools needed to make real time decisions and connect victims with resources that may save their lives. We all want to make sure not one more family has to experience what the Petito Family and so many others have experienced.”

Mindy Murphy, President/CEO, The Spring of Tampa Bay, Inc.: “The proposed Gabby Petito Act will standardize the way Florida law enforcement officers assess risk when they are called to the scene of an alleged incident of domestic violence. In doing so, this Act can save the lives of survivors, their children and those around them by identifying high lethality cases on scene. Immediately connecting victims with resources like safety planning and shelter at their locally certified domestic violence centers can quite literally be the difference between life and death. The Petito family's mission is to ensure no other family experiences what they have; this Act in their daughter's memory will help do just that.”

[In 2021, Gabby Petito, a 22-year-old woman, was reported missing after she did not return from a monthslong cross-country trip with her boyfriend.](#) Her remains were later found in a national park in Wyoming, and her cause of death was ruled to be strangulation – domestic violence at the hands of her partner. Subsequently, her boyfriend disappeared in Florida, where he lived, before taking his own life. Gabby is one of more than 10 million people each year in the United States who suffer domestic

violence.

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