



April 2026

To: Senate Judiciary Committee

Re: AAUW SUPPORTS SB095—Measures to Support Victim-Survivors of Crimes

Dear Committee Members,

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is one of the oldest women's organizations in the country, empowering women since 1881. The mission of AAUW is to advance equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy. More than 700 community leaders are AAUW members in local branches around the state.

AAUW has led the fight for equity for women and girls, and we have made progress over the years. Yet, too many predators are still in our community, ruining the lives of women and young girls. SB095 adds new protections for victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking and human trafficking. The bill also requires training for law enforcement relating to investigations and treatment of victims. Changing the focus to the victims, the bill renames the Colorado Sexual Assault Forensic Medical Evidence Review Board to the Colorado Sexual Assault Response Review Board, and adds new members to the board.

AAUW of Colorado strongly supports SB095 and urges your YES vote in committee and throughout the process of becoming law.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Su Ryden".

Hon. Su Ryden
AAUW Colorado Advocacy Director

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American Association of University Women--AAUW is a top-rated 501(c)3 charitable organization whose mission is to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.

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Office of the Attorney General

Attorney General Phil Weiser
Testimony on Senate Bill 26-095
Before the Committee on the Judiciary,
Colorado House
- April 14, 2026 -

Thank you, Chairman Mabrey. I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 26-095 and want to thank Reps. Froelich and Willford and the Senate sponsor for their leadership in bringing forward this proposed bill.

Coles Whalen, sitting next to me today, will share her experience with you as a victim and survivor of stalking. Stalking is a serious crime. It's dangerous, it upends people's lives, and it is too often under-reported and under-enforced. By advocating for this bill, Coles is turning her past pain into purpose, working to protect others.

After the criminal conviction of Coles' stalker was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, I argued her case before the justices and I got to know Coles and her family. In its *Counterman v. Colorado* decision, the Supreme Court considered whether the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects stalkers just as it protects journalists reporting on public officials. In reversing the lower court ruling, the Supreme Court required that prosecutors demonstrate a higher state of mind requirement than previously provided under Colorado law. In particular, the Court concluded that prosecutors must demonstrate that a stalker had a reckless disregard for whether his actions would cause a victim to fear for her physical safety.¹

During the Supreme Court case, Coles had a choice to make—would she use her voice to tell her story at the risk of being revictimized in the process? She had been a successful singer here in Colorado before her life was upended by this heinous crime. Like other victims, her stalker tormented her and tried to silence her. Because of this crime, she ended her singing career and left our state. But in the face of the

¹ *Counterman v. Colo.*, 600 U.S. 66 (2023).

Supreme Court case, she spoke up, not only telling her story, but making clear that victims must not let the perpetrators win and have the last word.²

In the aftermath of the Supreme Court's decision, Coles asked a critical question—how can we better protect victims who are too often revictimized while their cases proceed in the criminal justice system? Coles asked this question to stand up for victims of stalking and other related crimes, including those who received unwanted phone calls, texts, and online messages (including Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and other platforms) that create the fear of being killed or physically injured.

To put this in context, in 2019 alone, around 473,000 victims of stalking using digital technology suffered to such a degree that they feared losing their jobs, freedom, or social networks and friends because of such threats.³ Too often, those victims are reluctant to report the crimes they endured or to serve as a witness in the prosecution of their crimes, meaning that they do not receive justice or the protection they deserve. And in many cases, these individuals are victims of domestic violence, who generally report that the emotional abuse and fear they live with is worse than the physical abuse they suffered.⁴

The failure of our criminal justice system to protect victims is one our department continues to work to address. Colorado has a Victim Rights Act and we take protecting victims seriously. In the proposed bill, Colorado has an opportunity to develop an important innovation, providing a remote testimony option for those otherwise unable to testify in the same courtroom as the person who upended their lives and tormented them. Without this innovation, many victims—often out of fear of being re-victimized during the prosecution—will hesitate or decline to testify and thus allow stalkers and other dangerous criminals not to be held accountable for their crimes, including not just stalking, but also domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking.

I also appreciate that this bill implements many of the recommendations that the Sexual Assault Forensic Medical Evidence Review Board outlined in the report sent to the legislature in December of last year. Importantly, the bill requires

² Bennito L. Kelty, *Coles Whalen Releasing “Stronger” After Supreme Court Ruled for Her Stalker*, WESTWORD (Sept. 25, 2024), <https://www.westword.com/music/denver-musician-coles-whalen-song-supreme-court-stalking-case-21988605>; Riley Phillips, *Jacksonville Beach musician finding her voice again after U.S. Supreme Court set her stalker free*, FIRST COAST NEWS (Jan. 27, 2026), <https://www.firstcoastnews.com/article/news/local/jacksonville-cole-whalen-musician-supreme-court-stalker-ruling/77-0544f37c-6924-4f4b-a00d-7f3a7e677f2f>.

³ Rachel E. Morgan & Jennifer Truman, BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS, STALKING VICTIMIZATION, 2019, NCJ 301735, at Table 8 (2022), <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/sv19.pdf>.

⁴ K. Daniel O’Leary, Psychological Abuse: A Variable Deserving Critical Attention in Domestic Violence, VIOLENCE & VICTIMS 14, 1999 at 3, 13 (“Seventy-two percent of the women rated emotional abuse as having a more negative impact on them than the physical abuse.”).

survivors to be provided with information about how to obtain results and records from medical forensic examinations. This is a step towards empowering victims with critical information about their own case. The bill also makes changes to the board to better reflect its mission and adds seats to elevate more victim voices and municipal crime laboratories.

* * *

Let me close by again thanking Coles for her courage and her voice. We must be vigilant in protecting victims and work with them to address the failings in our criminal justice system. It is an honor to do that work and I thank you for your time and for your consideration of this proposed bill, which I urge you to support.



April 13, 2026

Representative Javier Mabrey, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
Colorado General Assembly
Denver, Colorado 80203

RE: Support for SB 26-095 — Measures to Support Victim-Survivors of Certain Crimes

Dear Chair Mabrey and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of Bakhita Mountain Home, a Colorado Springs nonprofit providing rent-free, long-term residential care and reintegration support to adult women survivors of human trafficking, I write in strong support of SB 26-095. This bill directly addresses legal and procedural barriers that prevent survivors from fully accessing justice and safety — and its passage would meaningfully improve outcomes for the women we serve.

Bakhita Mountain Home operates a confidential, up-to-two-year residential program in which women leaving trafficking situations receive their own private space, case management, trauma-informed services, and community support at no cost. Our residents navigate legal proceedings, trauma recovery, and system involvement simultaneously — often while their traffickers remain free and active. We see firsthand how gaps in the law obstruct their paths forward, and we see the cost when those gaps go unaddressed.

SB 26-095 addresses several of those gaps in ways that are practical and long overdue:

Sections 1 and 2 ensure survivors are informed of how to obtain their own forensic examination results — a basic right that current statute does not explicitly guarantee. Many women who come to Bakhita Mountain Home carry deep mistrust of systems that have historically failed them. Giving survivors direct access to their own forensic records supports their informed, empowered participation in legal proceedings — and is a concrete step toward rebuilding that trust.

Section 3 protects survivors who speak out. Traffickers are often organized, resourceful, and motivated to silence those who report. Retaliatory civil claims are a documented tool of intimidation — and the threat of litigation is frequently enough to keep survivors from disclosing at all. The anti-SLAPP mechanism for victim-survivor statements removes that legal weapon from traffickers’ arsenals, protecting survivors who report to law enforcement, child welfare agencies, or seek civil protection orders. For women weighing whether to come forward, this protection is not theoretical — it is the margin between disclosure and silence.

Section 7 authorizes closed-circuit television testimony for survivors of human trafficking in court proceedings. At Bakhita Mountain Home, we support residents through the full legal process — and courtroom appearances remain one of the most acute barriers to participation. For a woman who has spent months rebuilding safety and stability in our program, being required to share a physical space with the person who exploited her can collapse that recovery. Trauma does not observe procedural schedules. CCTV testimony is not a convenience — it is the difference between a survivor testifying and a perpetrator facing no accountability.

Sections 8 and 10 embed trauma-informed response training into annual peace officer requirements and authorize the use of the Peace Officer Training and Support Fund to support that training. Law enforcement interaction is typically a survivor’s first point of contact with any support system — often long before she reaches a residential program like ours. Whether a survivor re-engages with services or disappears frequently depends on how that initial encounter unfolds. Officers trained to recognize trauma responses, avoid retraumatization, and build trust produce better investigative outcomes and more survivors willing to accept help. The mandate for two hours of annual trauma-informed training is modest; its impact on survivor pathways is not.

In 2023, the U.S. recorded a 15-year high in reported human trafficking incidents — and Colorado was among the hardest hit, ranking 10th nationally in both total cases and rate per capita. Demand on organizations like Bakhita Mountain Home continues to grow — our waiting list reflects a need that outpaces available residential capacity. SB 26-095 does not fund residential programs directly, but it removes the legal and procedural obstacles that slow recovery, reduce cooperation with law enforcement, and expose survivors to continued harm. For the women we serve, those removals matter as much as a bed and a case manager.

The women Bakhita Mountain Home serves have already survived exploitation. SB 26-095 ensures the justice system does not compound that harm. We urge the Committee’s favorable passage of this bill.

Respectfully,

Jason Frazier
Executive Director
Bakhita Mountain Home
jason@bakhitamountainhome.org

House Judiciary

04/14/2026

SB26-095 Measures to Support Victim-Survivors of Crimes

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Davon Williams</p> <p>For themselves</p>	<p>Chair and members of the Committee,</p> <p>My name is Davon Williams, and I am a candidate for Colorado House District 3, representing communities in Denver and Arapahoe County. I am writing in support of SB26-095.</p> <p>This bill strengthens how victims and survivors receive timely information, medical care, and support following a crime. Ensuring individuals understand how to access forensic exam results, receive appropriate post-assault care, and navigate next steps is a critical part of a trauma-informed response.</p> <p>Victims should not have to navigate unclear or inconsistent systems during moments of crisis. Improving access to information and care is a practical step toward better outcomes.</p> <p>As someone who has experienced Colorado’s justice system firsthand, I understand how important it is that systems function clearly and consistently. In my work as a former director serving students and families, I have also seen how trauma impacts individuals long after an incident.</p> <p>Supporting victims through clear communication and access to care is a core part of public safety.</p> <p>For these reasons, I support SB26-095.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration.</p>

	Best, Davon Williams
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House Judiciary

04/14/2026 Upon Adjournment

SB26-095 Measures to Support Victim-Survivors of Crimes

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

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	<p>For these reasons, I support SB26-095.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration.</p> <p>Best,</p> <p>Davon Williams</p>
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