

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 8, 2020

Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington DC 20220

Commissioner Charles P. Rettig
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20224

Dear Secretary Mnuchin and Commissioner Rettig:

After speaking with advocates in New Hampshire, it has come to my attention that domestic violence survivors who have left their abuser and in some cases have active protective orders are unable to access their Economic Impact Payments (EIPs). These survivors are eligible for the funds, but EIPs have been deposited directly into their abuser's bank account. As a result, survivors cannot safely access the EIPs that they need during this difficult time. In some cases, this also denies these survivors the additional \$500 received for dependents if they have fled the relationship with their children.

Given the vulnerable position that domestic and sexual violence survivors already face in light of stay at home orders and social distancing requirements, I am deeply concerned about this situation. Domestic violence hotlines have reported a spike in calls for help, and law enforcement are increasingly responding to situations involving domestic violence. Survivors are most at risk immediately after they leave an abusive relationship, and 98% of domestic violence relationships involve financial abuse. This Administration must ensure survivors of domestic and sexual violence receive the support they need to remain safe, seek assistance and take steps towards independence.

A survivor should never have to choose between finding safety and accessing financial support that they are eligible for during the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, I respectfully request that you examine the implementation of the EIP program and respond to the following questions:

1. How do the IRS and Treasury plan to ensure that domestic violence survivors are able to access EIPs without having to contact their abuser?
2. How will the IRS and Treasury ensure that EIPs that have been given to abusers be recouped and redistributed to the rightful recipient, including dependent children?
3. What mechanisms are available for survivors to access EIPs that have been distributed to abusers?
4. How will the IRS and Treasury maintain survivors' privacy and confidentiality to ensure that their abusers are not able to access their location or financial information?

The COVID-19 pandemic has already increased the risk of domestic and sexual violence and compounded the challenges that survivors face in seeking assistance and remaining safe. The federal government should be doing everything it can to ease that burden by getting EIPs in the right hands.

I appreciate your attention to this issue and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator