



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lea Webb

Life-Saving Legislation to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence Gains Momentum as End of Legislative Session Approaches

LEA WEBB June 4, 2025

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Sen. Webb, AM Clark, and Joseph Petito from the Gabby Petito Foundation urge swift passage in the Assembly of legislation that would save lives by providing law enforcement with a tool designed to help them identify victims who are most at risk for intimate partner homicide.

(ALBANY, NY) Today, Senator Lea Webb and Assemblymember Sarah Clark held a press conference in support of their life-saving legislation (S2280A/A4899A) to require law enforcement officers to conduct a lethality assessment as part of the standardized domestic incident report form when responding to incidents of domestic violence.

Webb, Clark, and colleagues were joined by Joseph Petito, father of Gabby Petito, who was murdered by her partner in 2021. Petito and his family run the Gabby Petito Foundation to assist victims of domestic violence and to ensure every missing person case receives the attention it deserves. In his remarks, Petito noted the potential of this legislation to save women like his daughter, Gabby, noting that victims of domestic violence are often unaware of the imminent danger they face and frequently struggle to access available resources for safety planning to escape the violence.

Several communities across New York have adopted the use of lethality assessments including Broome, Dutchess and Westchester Counties. A recent study indicated that the use of lethality assessments reduces female homicide by men by almost 40%. Through the lethality assessment and resource sharing, law enforcement empowers victims with information, potentially saving their lives.

This bipartisan legislation passed unanimously through the Senate unanimously on May 13, 2025 and now awaits passage by the Assembly.

In addition to championing this domestic violence prevention measure, Senator Webb and Assemblymember Noah Burrows have also introduced legislation to establish an Ebony Alert system in New York State (S6865/A8386), focused on addressing the crisis of missing Black women and girls who are often overlooked in traditional missing persons alerts and media coverage. The Ebony Alert bill would ensure that cases involving missing Black youth and women receive the urgency and visibility they deserve.

Together, the Lethality Assessment legislation and the Ebony Alert system represent a growing movement toward equity, safety, and proactive intervention. Advocates stress that time is of the essence and are urging the Assembly to act quickly before the end of the legislative session.

“Both of these bills are about saving lives and addressing long-standing disparities in how we protect vulnerable communities,” **said Senator Lea Webb**. “Whether it’s ensuring a domestic violence survivor understands the real and immediate risk they face, or making sure the disappearance of a Black girl is treated with the same urgency as any other missing persons case, we must act. These are tools our law enforcement officers and families need right now.”

Said Assemblymember Sarah Clark, “Domestic violence is a reality for too many members of our community, and far too often, that violence becomes deadly. By requiring a standardized lethality assessment during law enforcement responses, we can help improve safety, take action through referral to domestic violence programs, provide extreme risk protection orders or whatever appropriate action is warranted. In other places across our country, an evidence based lethality assessment has saved lives. Thanks to Senator Webb and the many advocates throughout our state for their partnership to help those affected by domestic violence and ensure New York is a safer state for all.”

Said Senator Pete Harckham, “Conducting lethality assessments after incidents of domestic violence have been shown to save women's lives,” said Senator Harckham. “We should be utilizing every tool available to us to better protect members of our community, and requiring our law enforcement professionals to conduct lethality assessments when responding to a domestic violence call is a common-sense measure to help save lives. Thank you to my colleague Senator Webb for introducing this critical legislation to protect public health.”

Said Senator Nathalia Fernandez, “Too many lives have been lost because the signs of escalating violence were recognized too late. This legislation reflects a necessary shift toward early intervention, informed response, and a system that takes the threat of domestic violence seriously. It provides a more coordinated, preventive approach that prioritizes the

safety of survivors before the harm is done. I thank Senator Webb for her leadership on this critical issue and for championing a thoughtful, life-saving response to domestic violence across New York State.”

Senator Michelle Hinchey said, “Lethality assessments save lives. Dutchess County has been a leader implementing this critical process, and this bill ensures law enforcement statewide will have the necessary tools to meet the same high standards in protecting domestic violence victims. I commend Dutchess County for its initiative and Senator Webb and Assembly Member Clark for their leadership in bringing this bill forward.”

“I am proud to stand with Joseph Petito, father of Gabby Petito, Senator Lea Webb and my legislative colleagues to advocate for the full passage and enactment of this critical measure to provide victims of domestic violence with greater protections,” **said Senator Anthony Palumbo.** “Lethality assessments are an important tool, and potentially life saving layer of support for victims of domestic violence, helping to safeguard them from further harm and connecting them with vital resources. This legislation is important to the Petito family, whose Foundation assists victims of domestic violence and the countless New Yorkers living in domestic violence situations. As the final days of session approach, it is imperative that we get this bill passed and signed into law.”

Said Senator Rob Rolinson, “The Lethality Assessment has been a vital part of our response to domestic violence, equipping survivors with the critical information they need to make informed choices about their safety. Dutchess County is one of just three counties in New York currently using this proven, life-saving tool — and it’s time we change that. It should be implemented statewide to strengthen how we support and protect survivors in every community.”

Assemblymember Noah Burroughs said, “As an Assemblymember, I support the Ebony Alert because every missing person deserves the same urgency, the same media attention, and the same chance to come home. Black lives should never fade into silence. The Ebony Alert is not just a signal — it’s a promise that every Black life matters, and every missing voice will be heard, searched for, and brought home.”

Said Joseph Petito, Father of Gabby Petito, “Our family stands firmly in support of NY Bill S2280A/A4899A. This represents a critical step towards helping victims of domestic violence by prioritizing prevention and giving our law enforcement the tools to access and respond to domestic violence more effectively. It's a big jump to a future where every individual can feel safe in their own home.”

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