



State of South Carolina Office of the Governor

NIKKI R. HALEY
GOVERNOR

1205 PENDLETON STREET
COLUMBIA 29201

June 1, 2016

Ms. Crystal Scott
4105 Little River Road
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina 29577

Dear Ms. Scott,

Thank you for your heartfelt letter regarding your personal experience with domestic violence, highlighting many areas of government that need to be strengthened and improved. As a survivor, you know better than anyone what needs to be fixed so that South Carolina can become a safer place for our families, and I am grateful that you have stepped forward to share your story. I am inspired by women, like you, who have triumphed over violence, and I hope you will continue to use the power of your voice and get involved in the statewide movement to end domestic violence in South Carolina.

No one can doubt that South Carolina has a culture of domestic violence, evidenced by our state's ranking of first highest in the nation for the rate of women killed by men, which follows previous top ten rankings each year for the past ten years. As governor, and more importantly as a wife and mother, this ranking is troubling and sad on so many levels.

In January of 2015, I established the South Carolina Domestic Violence Task Force for the purpose of identifying and addressing systemic problems within our criminal justice system, the services we provide to victims and offenders, and the education, awareness, and outreach that we bring to our communities. County by county, the Task Force is analyzing the quality and quantity of training, services, and resources to ensure that every part of South Carolina is lifted up through this effort.

Last year, in addition to the Task Force and with the help from the General Assembly, I also signed into law the Domestic Violence Reform Bill, which rewrote the statutory offense of domestic violence to account for the severity of the crime, not just the number of prior offenses. By creating aggravating factors and increasing penalties, our law is now smarter and stronger, reflecting the true nature of domestic violence, which is rooted in power and control and inevitability escalates over time.

Ms. Crystal Scott

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To date, the Task Force has issued 50 Recommendations that address specific problems and propose specific solutions to cultural issues surrounding domestic violence in South Carolina – so far this year, 30 of those recommendations have been implemented, but more are to come. Recently, I launched our state's first website for domestic violence information and resources, www.safeplaceSC.sc.gov. Whether through changes in policy, law, or funding, the leaders of South Carolina will continue making domestic violence a priority.

Once again, thank you for contacting me and sharing your story. If there is anything I could do for you, please contact my staff at 803-734-6068. God bless.

My very best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Nikk R. Haley".

Nikk R. Haley

NRH/rs

A large, stylized handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Thank Crystal".