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Office of the Governor  
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## “ April Proclaimed as Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month: Reform the Norm!”

*“The silence and taboo of talking about these heinous acts has left many vulnerable to such abuses. It is crucial that we educate our sons and daughters on healthy relationships and on unacceptable behavior that should never be tolerated.”*

On Friday morning, April 1, 2022 the American Samoa Alliance Against Domestic & Sexual Violence (also known as the Alliance), held a virtual reading and signing proclaiming the month of April as Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month, where Governor, Honorable Lemanu P.S. Mauga was the guest speaker. The Alliance works to “empower individuals and community to learn about healthy relationships and communications to stop domestic and sexual violence.”

“It is a pleasure to be here this morning to join in support of such a worthy cause. I commend the American Samoa Alliance against Domestic and Sexual Violence and its leadership for organizing this virtual event,” stated the Honorable Governor Lemanu in his welcoming remarks. He continued, “We are grateful for your organization, for organizations such as yours, and all those who diligently advocate for others.”

The Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month “calls for attention to misconceptions and misinformation about sexual assault. Harmful attitudes allow for these crimes to persist and survivors to be re-victimized, and the importance of each of us speaking out against it, in order to change attitudes which, allow sexual assault to persist.”

As stated in the proclamation, “victims of sexual assault have a higher risk of experiencing a multitude of mental health conditions; Studies show Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is seven times higher in victims of sexual violence.

- Depression is 2.7 times greater, anxiety four times greater and drug-alcohol misuse six times greater
- Victims are 3.5 times greater to have suicidal thoughts than those who have not experienced violence
- COVID has exacerbated the already harrowing challenges facing sexual assault survivors by making it more difficult to seek help.”

Governor Lemanu, in his remarks, addressed the importance of having these safe spaces to have these difficult conversations with our families and loved ones. He continued, “The silence and taboo of talking about these heinous acts has left many vulnerable to such abuses. These negative behaviors and such abuse will only thrive if we remain silent. It is crucial that we educate our sons and daughters on healthy relationships and on unacceptable behavior that should never be tolerated.”

“Lt. Governor and I want to thank all non-government organizations that create programs for our most vulnerable populations. We thank our first responders, victim advocates, children and family service providers, health care providers, and those whose efforts strengthen our Territory’s response. We acknowledge the tireless efforts of everyone involved in this extremely important work.”

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