

(S. B. 1213)
(Conference)
(Reconsidered)

(No. 83-2020)

(Approved August 3, 2020)

AN ACT

To add a new subsection (t) to Section 2.04 of Act No. 20-2017, as amended, better known as the “Puerto Rico Department of Public Safety Act,” in order to direct the Commissioner of the Puerto Rico Police Bureau to establish a Crimes Against Women and Domestic Violence Unit within the Puerto Rico Police Bureau of the Department of Public Safety; and for other purposes.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

The new Department of Public Safety was created by virtue of Act No. 20-2017, as amended. The Statement of Motives of said Act establishes that

Public safety is a right that the State must guarantee to all its inhabitants, citizens, and residents to enable them to exercise their rights freely and safely. Citizens should feel safe and be certain that the State shall use its security forces against any individuals who fail to abide by the rule of law in order to protect their rights as victims. In addition, citizens should feel confident that their state Government shall be ready and available in an emergency to provide help immediately and efficiently to safeguard their lives, health, family, and property.

The Puerto Rico Police Bureau currently collects statistical information on crimes against women. Such crimes are classified as domestic violence, robbery, altercations, crimes of passion, drugs, and others. However, at present, there are several divisions within the Police Bureau that intervene in the investigation, processing, statistic collection and analysis processes, among other processes carried out, in connection with crimes committed against women. The public has

been recently made aware of the fact that, for example, involving violence against women are investigated by the Domestic Violence Division within the Criminal Investigation Corps. However, cases involving missing women are investigated by the Homicide Unit. Consequently, crimes against women are investigated by different Units within the Bureau. This separation of processes causes delays, jeopardizes information integrity, and also hinders a victim's access to more and better services.

In light of the foregoing, the purpose of this Act is that the Police Bureau establish a Crimes Against Women and Domestic Violence Unit. This unit shall be used to consolidate the investigation of crimes committed against women which include murder, homicide, sexual assault, domestic violence, missing women, kidnapping, among others, in order to streamline investigations to guarantee better services and allow for greater accuracy in the interpretation and analysis of statistical information on crimes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.- A new subsection (t) is hereby added to Section 2.04 of Act No. 20-2017, as amended, better known as the "Puerto Rico Department of Public Safety Act," to read as follows:

"Section 2.04.- Commissioner of the Bureau; Powers and Duties.

The Commissioner of the Puerto Rico Police Bureau shall have the following powers and duties:

(a) ...

(t) To establish a Crimes Against Women and Domestic Violence Unit within the Puerto Rico Police Bureau of the Department of Public Safety. This unit shall prioritize the investigation and processing of crimes committed against women which include murder, homicide, sexual assault, missing women, and kidnapping, among others; as well as Domestic Violence cases. The members of

the Police Bureau who are assigned to this unit shall have specialized training in how to assist, investigate, and process cases of incidences against women reported to said unit as well as involving Domestic Violence cases.”

Section 2.- The Department of Public Safety and the Puerto Rico Police Bureau shall have a period of one hundred eighty (180) days to take actions as are necessary to comply with the provisions of this Act.

Section 3.- The Puerto Rico Police Bureau shall gather consolidated statistics on crimes against women and publish said statistics in conjunction with the Women’s Advocate Office.

Section 4.- This Act shall take effect upon its approval.