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Member Agencies

Blackstone Valley
Advocacy Center

Domestic Violence
Resource Center of
South County

Elizabeth Buffum
Chace Center

Women's Resource Center

Task Force

Sisters Overcoming
Abusive Relationships

Affiliate Members

Center for Southeast Asians

Crossroads Rhode Island

Family Service of Rhode Island

McAuley Ministries –
McAuley Village

Progreso Latino

To: Representative Anastasia Williams, Chair of the House Labor Committee
Honorable Members of the House Labor Committee

From: Tonya Harris, Executive Director
RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Date: February 24, 2021

Re: **Support for House Bill 5130**

On behalf of our network of member agencies and SOAR, our taskforce of survivors, the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence appreciates this opportunity to express our **support for House Bill 5130**. This bill would predictably increase the minimum wage in Rhode Island until it reaches \$15, a wage that is consistent with the actual cost of living. This legislation will reduce poverty and address economic inequities based on gender and race. **Joining our neighbor states in establishing a path to a \$15 minimum wage is a priority for our Coalition this year; we need a path to a livable wage now, including for our neighbors who are tipped workers.**

Women and people of color are more likely to earn lower wages and therefore disproportionately experience the adverse health effects of living in poverty.¹ Wages and finances are strongly linked to a person's ability to access healthy food and other resources, creating links between poverty and chronic diseases including obesity and diabetes.² Many low-wage earners are the main providers for their families, putting many children at risk of living in poverty. One in five children in the United States live in poverty and Black and Hispanic families are disproportionately represented among those making minimum wages.³

Poverty and income inequality are root causes of domestic violence. 1 in 4 American women report having experienced a negative impact from physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in their lives. The societal costs associated with intimate partner violence are substantial. According to the CDC, the lifetime per-victim cost is \$103,767 for women and \$23,414 for men. The lifetime economic cost to the U.S. population is \$3.6 trillion. This economic cost estimate includes almost 32 million women and 12 million men who are victims of intimate partner violence during their lives.⁴ Lack of financial stability is a prominent reason that victims are unable to leave an abusive relationship. No victim of domestic violence should have to choose between economic security and their own safety due to earning unlivable wages that cannot fully support themselves and their children. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. **We urge you to support H 5130 this session.**

¹ Improving Health by Increasing the Minimum Wage. *American Public Health Association*. (2016). Retrieved from <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2017/01/18/improving-health-by-increasing-minimum-wage>

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Intimate partner violence: Consequences. *U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. (2018). Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/intimatepartnerviolence/consequences.html>