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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

YWCA Rhode Island

To: Representative Joseph McNamara, Chair of the House Education Committee
Honorable Members of the House Education Committee

From: Lucy Rios, Executive Director
RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Date: April 23, 2025

Re: **Opposition to House Bill 5842**

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 **opposition to House Bill 5842, legislation that is harmful to the LGBTQ+ community in Rhode Island, including survivors of domestic violence.** H-5842 seeks to target and exclude transgender students by prohibiting them from playing on a school sports team with their friends based on their biological identity at birth. It would also potentially subject any female student athlete to invasive and unnecessary medical exams.

Ensuring a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment is crucial for the well-being and success of all youth. This is especially true for those who are part of the LGBTQ+ community. When these types of environments are not provided and anti-LGBTQ+ proposed legislation is debated, there are serious negative consequences that effect youth members from this community. Anti-LGBTQ+ discussions create an environment in which many members of this community become vulnerable to acts of bullying/cyberbullying and other forms of victimization and discrimination. These discussions have a serious negative impact on the mental health of members of the community, with many expressing increased anxiety and depression. Many members of the LGBTQ+ community avoid seeking medical care even if they are sick or injured due to fear for their safety in these settings. These discussions also negatively impact healthcare providers with many reporting being fearful of providing essential medical care to members of this community due to the fear of being penalized for it. This bill would only increase the many barriers and concerns many members of the LGBTQ+ community already face.

Every survivor of intimate partner violence deserves access to services, safety, and equal treatment. Survivors in the LGBTQ+ community face unique challenges and barriers to safety. In particular, transgender survivors of color experience epidemic rates of violence and increasing hostility. According to the U.S. Transgender Survey, which had more than 27,000 participants from across the country, more than half of transgender respondents reported experiencing intimate partner violence, including acts involving coercive control and physical harm. Nearly half reported experiencing sexual assault.

Domestic and sexual violence prevention organizations leaders all agree: transgender victims must have the same access to safety and supports as all survivors of intimate partner violence in our communities. When we protect the most underserved, all members of our communities' benefit.

The RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence advocates for ALL survivors; that includes strong protections for LGBTQ+ survivors, youth, and communities who face discrimination and fears for safety on a daily basis.