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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 Marvin Abney, Chair of the House Finance Committee
Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee

From: Lucy Rios, Executive Director
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Date: February 29, 2024

Re: **Support for House Bill 7225 Article 5, Question 3**

On behalf of our network of member agencies and SOAR, our taskforce of survivors, the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV) appreciates this opportunity to **support Article 5, Question 3 in the Governor's proposed budget.** This question proposes \$100 million to increase affordable and middle-income housing production and infrastructure, support community revitalization, and promote homeownership. **We strongly urge the Committee to recommend increasing the proposed bond item to \$150 million to support affordable housing production and preservation for low and moderate-income households.**

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children. No victim of domestic violence should have to choose between staying in an abusive situation or becoming homeless due to a lack of safe, affordable, and fair housing opportunities. In 2023, Rhode Island's domestic violence/sexual assault Helpline and hotlines answered 12,397 calls, many related to questions about safe and affordable housing options. Many of these requests were not able to be met due to the lack of available safe and affordable housing choices for survivors of domestic violence.

Rhode Island has a shortage of roughly 24,000 rental homes that are affordable and available to households who are extremely low income (for a household of three people, this equates to approximate yearly earnings of \$30,000 or less). Thirty-two percent (32%) of renters, or 51,596 renter households are considered extremely low income (HousingWorks RI, 2023). We must prioritize creating housing for low-income households, who face significant challenges in finding affordable homes.

It is critical to our public safety and public health that victims feel safe in their communities. Fair and affordable housing is the foundation of safety. One of the most dangerous times for a victim of domestic violence is when they begin to escape the abuse and fair housing options support victims in their journey to safety. Perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence will often prevent survivors from gaining resources that would allow them to leave. This often leads to survivors staying with the abuser because they do not have the resources and options to leave. No victim escaping an abusive situation should fear that safe and equal housing will be denied to them because of the lack of available housing options. Increasing the proposed bond item to \$150 million would develop more safe options for victims fleeing violence by expanding the opportunities and options for safe and fair housing.

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.¹ Loss of financial stability and housing is a prominent reason that victims are unable to leave an abusive relationship. No victim of domestic violence should remain at risk because of a lack of safe and fair housing opportunities and options.

These measures are essential steps towards addressing the housing crisis and providing every Rhode Island resident with a place they can call home. This bond represents a commitment to the well-being and prosperity of all Rhode Islanders, laying the groundwork for a more equitable and sustainable future. With strategic investments and concerted efforts, we can forge a path towards a Rhode Island where housing insecurity is a thing of the past, and every resident has a place to call home.

Thank you for your consideration of House Bill 7225 Article 5, Question 3. **We urge the Committee to support this budget article and question (Article 5, Question 3) and consider increasing the proposed amount to \$150 million to produce and preserve more affordable, safe homes for low and moderate- income Rhode Islanders.**

¹ Intimate partner violence: Consequences. *U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. (2022). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/fastfact.html>