641 Bald Hill Road
Warwick, RI 02886
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www.ricadv.org
ricadv@ricadv.org
24-hour Helpline:
800-494-8100

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: April 29, 2026

Re: **Support for House Bill 7803**

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 express our **support for House Bill 7803.** This bill would establish a $25 million state-funded rental subsidy program in Rhode Island to help in the prevention of homelessness for Rhode Island's most vulnerable residents.

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 2025, Rhode Island's domestic violence/sexual assault Helpline and hotlines answered 9,667 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.

This bill addresses the root cause of homelessness in Rhode Island, the lack of housing that is affordable to the lowest-income residents. The lowest income households in Rhode Island are earning less than 30% of Area Median Income. This is less than $24,000 per year for a single person or $31,000 for a household of three. Rental subsidies are necessary to bridge the gap between what these individuals can pay and the actual cost of housing. Rhode Island cannot rely on federal rental assistance alone either. Federal resources are increasingly uncertain, and currently only about one in four households who qualify for rental assistance actually receive it. A state-funded program ensures more reliable, consistent support for our most vulnerable Rhode Islanders – those at risk of homelessness or currently experiencing homelessness.

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. Research shows that financial abuse occurs in 99% of domestic violence cases resulting in many survivors feeling forced to staying with the abuser because they do not have the resources and options to leave.[1] 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. Creating a $25 million state rental subsidy program 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

[1] About Financial Abuse. *National Network to End Domestic Violence.* (2024). Retrieved from https://nnedv.org/content/about-financial-abuse/

almost 43.5 million women and 20.7 million men who are victims of intimate partner violence during their lives.[2] Loss of financial stability and housing is a prominent reason that victims are unable to leave an abusive relationship. Providing stable housing is significantly less expensive than emergency shelters, hospitals, and crisis services. By stably housing those at risk of homelessness and those experiencing homelessness, we reduce long-term public costs. 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 program prioritizes Rhode Islanders with the greatest need, 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 7803. We strongly urge the committee to support this bill ensuring more affordable, equitable, and stable housing for all Rhode Islanders.

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[2] Intimate partner violence: Consequences. *U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.* (2024). Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence/about/index.html