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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 Robert E. Craven, Sr., Chair of the House Judiciary Committee
Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee

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

Date: March 5, 2024

Re: **Support for House Bill 7577**

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 **strong support for House Bill 7577**. This legislation protects established, best-practice medical care that is legal in Rhode Island and ensures our local providers and health care infrastructure aren't negatively impacted by hostile laws in other states.

This legislation is about Rhode Island's ability to protect health care providers, patients, and access to essential care. Restricting any access to reproductive health services and choices places particularly dangerous burdens on victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Victims of domestic violence are at a significantly higher risk for unintended pregnancy because partners who use violence will often sabotage or interfere with their partner's birth control in an attempt to exercise control over their reproductive decisions. In a study conducted jointly by the University of California-Davis School of Medicine and the Harvard School of Public Health, researchers found that at least 35% of domestic violence victims reported reproductive control by their abusive partner either by contraception interference or coercion to become pregnant.¹

LGBTQIA+ and gender non-conforming people experience domestic abuse and interrelated forms of violence at disproportionately high rates, so protecting this population's safe access to healthcare is essential. In addition to experiencing high rates of domestic and sexual violence, trans and non-binary people are often the targets of transphobic hate crimes and state violence, making this healthcare access protection even more important.²

More than 20 states have enacted bans on essential, established medical care which exert extraordinary control over people's lives and even impose civil and criminal penalties on providers for practicing medicine in line with the professional standards of care. **These bans have the potential to cross state lines and impact providers here in Rhode Island.**

This legislation will protect providers, their patients, and ensure the viability of the health delivery system, depended upon by at-risk domestic violence victims who face additional danger when a pregnancy is added to a violent and abusive relationship.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. We urge you to **support House Bill 7577**.

¹ "Pregnancy Coercion, Intimate Partner Violence, and Unintended Pregnancy," Miller, et al. *Contraception*, Volume 81, Issue 4, 2010.

² National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. *Violence Against Trans and Non-Binary People*. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://vawnet.org/sc/serving-trans-and-non-binary-survivors-domestic-and-sexual-violence/violence-against-trans-and>