



641 Bald Hill Road  
Warwick, RI 02886  
401-467-9940  
[www.riadv.org](http://www.riadv.org)  
[riadv@riadv.org](mailto:riadv@riadv.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 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 13, 2024

Re: **Support for House Bills 7217 and 7373**

---

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 **strong support for H 7217, which would prohibit the future sale and possession of assault weapons and H 7373, which would require gun owners to securely store their firearms when not under their immediate control.**

When a person who uses violence to gain power and control over their loved ones has easy access to a gun, too often, the results are tragic. **Women in abusive relationships are five times more likely to be murdered by their partners when that partner can access a gun.**<sup>1</sup> An average of 57 women are shot and killed by an intimate partner every month in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> The risk to other people close to the domestic violence victim also increases with access to a firearm. In our report on domestic violence homicides in Rhode Island from 2016 to 2020, three bystanders who were murdered during an attack on a domestic violence victim were killed with a gun. **Of the 26 domestic violence homicides that occurred in R.I. between 2016 and 2020, 42% involved a firearm.**

The need for these reforms is urgent. During the COVID-19 pandemic, gun sales increased significantly, both in R.I. and nationally. At the onset of the pandemic, between February and March 2020, **R.I. saw a 132% increase in federal background check requests to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System related to gun sales.**

Mass shooting perpetrators often have histories of misogyny and domestic abuse. A study of U.S. gun violence crimes from 2009-2016 found that **the majority of mass shootings (54%) were related to domestic or family violence.**<sup>3</sup> This study concluded that these mass shootings significantly impacted children, who made up 25% of the mass shooting fatalities. This is primarily driven by mass shootings related to domestic or family violence, in which **over 40% of the fatalities were children.** Recent cases also demonstrate how perpetrators can easily access military-style, high-capacity magazine assault weapons designed to kill the most victims in the shortest amount of time, resulting in much higher fatality rates.

For the lives of victims of domestic violence, bystanders, responding officers, first responders, and community members, it is critical to have clear and enforceable laws to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous individuals and to limit access to military-style weapons and high-capacity ammunition capable of slaughtering children and adults in our Rhode Island communities.

**We urge you to pass these critical gun safety bills this year**, limiting the access of these deadly weapons to save lives and keep our communities safe and healthy.

---

<sup>1</sup> Intimate Partner Violence and Firearms. *Johns Hopkins University Center for Gun Policy and Research.*

<sup>2</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety. (2021, April 27). Guns and Violence Against Women: America's Uniquely Lethal Intimate Partner Violence Problem. Retrieved from <https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-and-violence-against-women-americas-uniquely-lethal-intimate-partner-violence-problem/>

<sup>3</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety. (2017). Mass shootings in the United States: 2009-2016. *Everytown Research.* Retrieved from [https://everytownresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Analysis\\_of\\_Mass\\_Shootings\\_033117.pdf](https://everytownresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Analysis_of_Mass_Shootings_033117.pdf)