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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 26, 2025

Re: **Support for House Bills 5436, 5652, 5654, and 5891**

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 5436, which would prohibit the future sale and possession of assault weapons. H 5652, which would prohibit those who pled nolo contendere or convicted of a misdemeanor offense and sentenced in accordance with the hate crime sentencing enhancement act for such misdemeanor from accessing firearms. H 5654 which would prohibit the issuance of concealed carry permits to out-of-state residents based on permits issued by authorities from other states or subdivisions and H 5891 which closes a loophole on individuals with prior felony convictions from accessing firearms.**

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.**¹ An average of 57 women are shot and killed by an intimate partner every month in the U.S.² 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 and about half of the DV homicide perpetrators in the five-year report had prior DV criminal histories with and 45% (10) of the perpetrators had previously been convicted or pled nolo contendere in a domestic violence case.**

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.**³ 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.

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

² 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-violenceproblem/>

³ 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_Shooting_033117.pdf

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.