



422 Post Road
Warwick, RI 02888
401-467-9940
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

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: April 1, 2025

Re: **Support for House Bill 5298**

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 **support for House Bill 5298**. This bill would prohibit any questioning of a juvenile who is suspected of delinquent or criminal behavior, unless the parent or guardian of the juvenile is present, or unless an attorney is present, or the juvenile and their parents have waived their presence.

At the core of domestic violence is power and control, where one person uses abusive tactics to maintain power and control over their partner. This dynamic is rooted in systems of oppression on the societal level: racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and transphobia, to name some of them. Systems of oppression create conditions such as poverty, the lack of educational and economic opportunity for children and youth, and harmful gender norms, which are factors that increase the risk for domestic violence. This is why we believe that in order to end domestic abuse, we must end oppression in all its forms.

Lack of economic, social and educational opportunities for youth in our communities can be a risk factor for domestic violence occurring in our communities. Adding juvenile delinquency history to a young person's record contributes to a lack of positive opportunities in their life. This is why it is critical that children have adults or guardians present with them when being questioned in custody, at a time when their brains have not yet fully developed, and their problem-solving, reasoning and risk-aversion capabilities remain diminished.

Youth have the same rights as adults, but youth do not have the same capacity as adults to understand those constitutional rights, especially under the stress of an interrogation by authorities when the child's understanding and comprehension of the situation and consequences may be greatly reduced. It is critical that parents or guardians be involved in this decision before an interrogation moves forward. Additionally, because youth of color are much more likely to be arrested despite committing crimes at the same rate as white youth, the uninformed waiving of Miranda rights creates inequities that can persist throughout the child's entire life if they get a juvenile record based on an interrogation or false confession made when a parent or guardian would have insisted on having an attorney present to protect their rights.

Thank you for your consideration of this important juvenile justice legislation. **We urge you to support House Bill 5298.**