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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, 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: **Concerns Regarding House Bills 5501 and 6041 as Written; Request for Amendments**

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 **request specific amendments in a Sub A to House Bill 5501 and 6041 that would allow the RICADV to support these pieces of legislation.** After considering and discussing this issue at length at the Coalition and with our community partners at DARE advocating for this bill, we would respectfully request exemption and carve-out language for *all* domestic violence offenses that will allow the court some discretion to provide for the safety of a domestic abuse survivor when a probation violation involves a domestic violence related offense, including the violation of a protective order.

We request the following language to be included in H5501 and H6041: **“When the provisions of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act, chapter 29 of title 12 are applicable in the alleged probation violation, the court may order the defendant held without bail for a period not exceeding ten (10) days, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.”**

This language is specific and includes all enumerated domestic offenses in RIGL 12-29-2. The current language in House Bill 6041, “and any domestic crime that has an element of violence,” is vague and overly open to interpretation on what offense may or may not have an element of violence. Violation of a restraining order for example, can indicate extremely dangerous stalking behavior that is a lethality risk indicator, even if the offense charged itself may be considered by some to be “non-violent.” Currently, House Bill 5501 does not include any exemption language for domestic violence offenses. We strongly encourage this exemption language to be included to help ensure the safety of domestic violence victims.

Survivor safety is critical, and allowing the court some discretion when the offense may indicate dangerous escalation to lethality is particularly important. In our recent publication, the [2016-2020 RI Domestic Violence Homicides report](#), on page 4, we concluded: “*Just over half of the perpetrators had previous involvement in domestic violence-related judicial proceedings. Fifty-five percent (12) of the perpetrators were or had been subject to a civil domestic violence restraining order, and 45% (10) of the perpetrators had previously been convicted or pled nolo contendere in a domestic violence case.*” Although about half of the DV homicide perpetrators in the five-year report had prior DV criminal histories, about half of them had *no prior* DV history in their record. Since a potentially deadly case of intimate partner violence could take place without a documented track record in the system, our position is that *domestic violence offense exemption language* is important in these bills for the court’s discretion on danger and risk assessment, and necessary for survivor safety reasons.

Page 9 of the same DV Homicide report also highlights research indicating that the period of time immediately after a survivor takes steps to end the abusive relationship, report abuse,

or leave the abusive partner is uniquely dangerous: “The time after a victim ends an abusive relationship can be one of the most dangerous periods. Perpetrators of domestic violence will often escalate their tactics of abuse as they start to lose control over the victim.” The discretion of a court to remove a violent abusive partner from the victim for a matter of even a few days could give the victim time to safely flee, relocate to safe housing, and access the needed support, advocacy, and resources to remain safe. These couple of days can sometimes be the difference between life or death for survivors.

With the inclusion of these language-change amendments pertaining to a specific and clear domestic violence offense carve-out when considering bail conditions, the RICADV would then be able to support these important bail reform bills.