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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: April 22, 2025

Re: **Support for House Bills 5893 and 5895**

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 **support for House Bills 5893 and 5895**. These bills make important changes to forms used by law enforcement that capture critical information related to incidences of domestic violence and sexual assault. Enhancing the information collected by this form creates a clearer picture of the dynamics present for every victim, improving the ability for existing systems to intervene more precisely and effectively.

One critical change made by this legislation is the specific addition of verbal disturbances as a cause to submit the domestic violence/sexual assault (DVSA) reporting form. This shift would allow the data to be more representative of the cycle of violence – acknowledging how domestic violence includes verbal abuse and often tragically escalates to more severe abuse and homicide. Further, law enforcement advocates in our state rely on DVSA forms to locate contact information for victims/survivors. The sooner within the cycle of violence that advocates can reach out to victims to provide support, the better the odds are at safe intervention and disruption to that cycle of violence.

Another significant improvement proposed by this legislation adds collection of information related to the existence of language barriers for victims. Adding this to the DVSA forms helps paint a clearer picture of the additional barriers victims/survivors are facing as they navigate the justice system. This change also allows law enforcement advocates advanced notice so they can better support victims upon initial contact and pre-arrange language access services.

A third improvement proposed by this legislation includes identifying whether the felony enhancement notation should be applied. Existing RI statute requires that a third misdemeanor level domestic violence offense be charged as a felony, though this enhancement is often inadvertently missed. This change allows for law enforcement and advocates to better identify patterns of escalating abuse and the connected possibility of lethality risk for victims experiencing continued abuse.

DVSA forms are an important tool for law enforcement as they can demonstrate the totality of circumstances when it comes to domestic violence and sexual assault. Beyond the individual data that supports each victim's experience with the law enforcement system, they provide statistics on how many incidents have occurred (with/without arrest), and the data can be disaggregated by gender, location, whether children or firearms were present, and more.

Enhancing the information collected by the DVSA form will positively impact supports available to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and paint a clearer picture of the patterns of violence across the state. **We urge the committee to support this proposed legislation.**