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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 Bill 6160, Survivor Early Lease Termination

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 **strong support for House Bill 6160, the Survivor Early Lease Termination Act. This legislation is a top priority for the RICADV, SOAR and our statewide member agencies this year.** This survivor safety bill would provide crucial protections for victims and their children fleeing abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. It will allow eligible survivors to terminate their lease early for safety reasons, without incurring fees or penalties. It would make this process clear, with required tenant-victim documentation for eligibility provided to landlords. This bill would also enable survivors with the necessary documentation to be allowed a lock-change at their apartment, at the tenant's expense. We have heard from many victims in RI who need these options.

A coalition of Rhode Island survivors, domestic and sexual violence victim service providers, and advocates came together to champion this bill, based on similar laws from our neighboring New England states, all of whom already have this safe housing law.

Key provisions of the Survivor Early Lease Termination Act include:

- A prohibition on evictions, fees, and other penalties for abuse survivors who terminate their lease to flee for their safety.
- A prohibition on landlords disclosing confidential information obtained from survivors.
- A variety of methods survivors can use to verify their status with written documentation, including self-certification as found in other RI domestic abuse safety laws.

41 states already have early lease termination laws for survivors, with [New Hampshire joining this list in May 2024](#). 19 states have tenant [lock-change laws](#) for survivors.

Survivors of abuse who live in public housing or federally subsidized housing are already protected through the federal policies in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA was reauthorized in 2022 with updated fair housing protections for victims and collaboration between survivors, housing advocates, and government agencies such as HUD. VAWA is considered the standard when it comes to defining housing protections for survivors. **This bill¹ would extend the survivor tenant protections covered in VAWA to private housing here in Rhode Island, enshrining this critical and fair protection in state law, and joining the 41 states that have already taken this step.**

¹ We would respectfully request that language be stricken from the "Definitions" section of the bill, as it was not intended to be included. The following language should be deleted in a Sub A, at page 2, lines 5-8:

(4) "Actual address" means the physical location where the applicant resides, as specified on the individual's application to be a program participant under this chapter.

(5) "Agency" means any subdivision of the State of Rhode Island, a municipality, or a subdivision of a municipality.

VAWA allows survivors, if requested, to provide a self-attestation that declares they are a victim of domestic or sexual violence. There are many survivors who do not file for restraining orders and most abusers are not criminally charged or convicted. Many lease termination laws across the country allow certification by the survivor and/or third parties such as domestic violence and sexual assault advocates so that all survivors are covered by these protections.

We thank you for your consideration and urge you to pass the bill this year.