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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 Carol Hagan McEntee, 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 12, 2026

Re: Support for House Bills 7648 and 7653

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 7648 and 7653**. 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.

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.

One critical change made 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.

This legislation also proposes a specific notation identifying whether the felony enhancement should be applied. The existing RI domestic violence 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.

The third critical change proposed by this legislation would support consistent electronic submission of DVSA forms across departments. Improving timely access to data related to domestic violence and sexual assault incidents helps our criminal legal systems to understand and respond to patterns of escalated violence across our communities with more urgency.

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.**