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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  
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Date: April 2, 2026

Re: **Support for House Bills 7079, 7204, 7281**

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 regarding House Bills 7079, 7204, 7281**. These bills would make the following critical reforms to our expungement process:

- H. 7079: Permits those individuals convicted of multiple felonies and misdemeanors to have their records expunged and provide criteria for the court to consider in determining whether the person is of good moral character.
- H. 7204: Allows expungement of multiple felony convictions for non-violent felonies 10 years after sentence completed.
- H. 7281: Reduces the time for expungements to 3 years for a single misdemeanor and 5 years for felonies and multiple misdemeanors.

We appreciate that the sponsor has taken into consideration the unique survivor safety risks that are present as we strive toward building more equitable justice responses by exempting the domestic violence crimes from these proposed changes.

As we know, the overwhelming majority of incarcerated women have experienced domestic or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Experiencing abuse is a pipeline to incarceration as survivors are trapped in conditions that leave them without stable access to housing, job security, social connections, mental and physical health, and other protective factors. As a result, **promoting survivor justice requires building systems that provide support and resources to communities impacted by incarceration.**

Many folks with criminal records experience difficulties in finding housing and employment, perpetuating the negative cycle of limited access to basic survival and safety resources. This can have fatal consequences for survivors of domestic violence, for whom the likelihood of experiencing physical abuse or homicide increases greatly when their abuser is unemployed.<sup>2</sup> Survivors are also at an increased risk of experiencing domestic violence when they are unemployed themselves, as their vulnerable economic position can make it easier for their abuser to assert power and control.<sup>2</sup>

The changes proposed by these bills recognize that all our communities, including domestic violence survivors, benefit from systems that balance accountability and fairness. Prolonged penalties for non-domestic violence related crimes do more to put our communities at risk of continued violence than to protect them. Thank you for your consideration. **We urge your support of House Bills 7079, 7204, 7281.**

<sup>1</sup> Shannon M. Lynch et al., Women's Pathways to Jail: The Roles and Intersections of Serious Mental Illness and Trauma (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2012), 32

<sup>2</sup> Sonia Bhalotra, Diogo G C Britto, Paolo Pinotti, Breno Sampaio: Job Displacement, Unemployment Benefits and Domestic Violence, *The Review of Economic Studies*, 2025; rda004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rda004>