



To: Representative Carol Hagan McEntee, Chair of the House Judiciary Committee
Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Michelle M. LePage, Executive Director
Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County

Date: May 19, 2026

Re: **Support for House Bill 7199, Survivor Early Lease Termination**

On behalf of the Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County (DVRSC), serving the residents of Charlestown, Exeter, Hopkinton, Narragansett, New Shoreham, North Kingstown, Richmond, South Kingstown, and Westerly, we appreciate this opportunity to voice our strong **support for House Bill 7199, sponsored by Representative Alzate, the Survivor Early Lease Termination Act.**

After critical feedback from survivors and domestic violence advocates statewide regarding the need for this protection, this legislation would provide crucial protections to victims and their children fleeing abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking to terminate their lease early for safety reasons, without the fear of being penalized.

Domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children. It is critical to our public safety and public health that victims feel safe in their communities. Many RI survivors have provided critical feedback about the need for this housing protection in order to feel safe while escaping abuse. No victim of domestic violence or other forms of abuse should have to choose between staying in an abusive situation or becoming homeless due to a lack of opportunities to escape safely and without fear of repercussions. This legislation will create an important additional protection for the survivors we serve every day.

Under this legislation, it will allow eligible survivors and their children fleeing from abuse and harm 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.

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.

We thank the members of this committee for your leadership and support on this critical issue affecting our communities, neighbors and loved ones.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle M. LePage