



641 Bald Hill Road
Warwick, RI 02886
401-467-9940
www.ricadv.org
ricadv@ricadv.org
24-hour Helpline:
800-494-8100

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: May 19, 2026

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

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 7199, the RI Survivor Early Lease Termination Act. This bill is a top priority for the RICADV, SOAR and our statewide member agencies again 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 RI Survivor Early Lease Termination Act include:

- A prohibition on fees and penalties for survivors who terminate their lease to flee for their safety; **prevention of crime and homicide taking place on owner's property.**
- A variety of methods survivors can use to verify their status with written documentation, including a self-certification form through the RI Secretary of State, as found in other RI domestic abuse safety laws, including the DV Address Confidentiality Program.

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 bill 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 life-saving step.**

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. Lease termination laws 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. Thank you for your consideration; we urge you to pass the bill this year.