

May 8, 2026

To the Honorable Members of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees

Rhode Island State House

82 Smith Street

Providence, RI 02903

Re: Urgent Need for Early Lease Termination in Domestic Violence Cases

Dear Chairpersons and Committee Members,

I am writing to you as a Rhode Island resident. I have been a resident since 2017 and have received two bachelor degrees from higher education in RI. I am a survivor of domestic violence who has lived the consequences of our justice system's gaps. I speak for many who, like me, have been forced to rebuild our lives while the law fails to fully recognize the complexities and realities of surviving abuse.

I never thought I would have to fight for my own safety, not just from my abuser, but from the very place I called home. After surviving a violent attack in my apartment in 2023 at Kettle Point in East Providence, where my boyfriend strangled me, my only priority was to feel secure again. Instead, my apartment complex, where I was a resident for five years, refused to let me change my locks immediately, leaving me exposed to the person who tried to take my life. I did everything in my power to provide my own safety, reported the abuse to the police, and decided to press charges. However, my abuser did indeed return to my apartment prior to the locks being changed and he was placed behind bars for less than twenty-four hours. When I asked to end my lease to escape the danger, they told me I would have to pay a penalty, which was roughly eight thousand dollars, since my lease term was through November and this occurred in May. Strangulation is one of the

strongest predictors of homicide in domestic violence cases, survivors who have been strangled by an intimate partner are 750% more likely to be killed by them later. Yet as a domestic violence survivor, I was met with policies that valued profit over protection. No one should have to choose between their safety and financial ruin.

The absence of H. 7199 (Survivor Early Lease Termination Act) / Senate Bill 2291 can lead to further violence and is a financial burden to the victim.

When survivors are forced to stay in place, they are at risk of a tragic outcome. I chose to leave immediately due to safety concerns. The complex refused to release me without penalty, which resulted in harassment from a collection agency and a derogatory impact on my credit score.

If you do not pass this legislation, you are not just delaying policy change; you are delaying safety, stability, and hope for real people. You are asking survivors to continue serving time, both literally and figuratively, for the crimes of their abusers.

As policymakers and representatives of the people, you have the power to affirm that Rhode Island's justice system values fairness, compassion, and the dignity of every survivor. I urge you to advance and pass this legislation allowing domestic violence survivors the opportunity for early lease termination. This is not just a matter of law; it is a matter of moral responsibility.

Please let Rhode Island stand with the rest of New England, more importantly forty-one other states' understanding and responding to the realities of domestic violence. Survivors have already endured enough.

Respectfully,

Marie Young