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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 Arthur Corvese, Chair of the House Labor Committee
Honorable Members of the House Labor Committee

From: Lucy Rios, Executive Director
RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Date: April 10, 2024

Re: **Support for House Bill 7793**

On behalf of our network of member agencies and SOAR, our taskforce of survivors, the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence appreciates this opportunity to express our **strong support for H 7793**. This legislation would increase the amount of unpaid parental or family leave available to an employee from thirteen (13) weeks to twenty-four (24) weeks in any two (2) calendar years.

The relationship between poverty and domestic violence is well-documented – when survivors don't have access to secure economic resources, they are less able to leave an abusive relationship. When a survivor is pregnant, the stakes are even higher. Homicide is the leading cause of maternal mortality in the U.S., with Black and young mothers at a significantly elevated risk.¹ **The perinatal period is a distinctly stressful and economically precarious time for many families in our state, resulting in an increased risk of family violence and loss of life.² Investing in economic justice and financial security by expanding our parental and family leave program will strengthen our state's family violence prevention policies.**

The societal costs associated with intimate partner violence are substantial. According to the CDC, the lifetime per-victim cost is \$103,767 for women and \$23,414 for men. The lifetime economic cost to the U.S. population is \$3.6 trillion. This economic cost estimate includes almost 32 million women and 12 million men who are victims of intimate partner violence during their lives.³ Expanding protected leave for workers recognizes the importance of investing in economic security for families and will help reduce the financial impact that survivors face.

No victim of domestic violence should have to choose between economic security and personal safety. **Strengthening our parental and family leave program means investing in the protective factors that we know keep mothers, women, and families safe, reducing the many costs of domestic violence on our state.**

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. **We urge you to support H 7793 to expand and strengthen Rhode Island's parental and family leave program.**

¹ Wallace, M., Gillispie-Bell, V., Cruz, K., Davis, K., Vilda, D. (2021, November). Homicide During Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period in the United States, 2018–2019. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 138(5), 762-769. <https://doi.org/10.1097/AOG.0000000000004567>

² Bullinger, L. R., Klika, B., Feely, M., Ford, D., Merrick, M., Raissian, K., Rostad, W., Schneider, W. (2023, January). Paid Family Leave: An Upstream Intervention to Prevent Family Violence. *Journal of Family Medicine*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-022-00486-3>

³ "Preventing Intimate Partner Violence." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. (2022, October) www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/fastfact.html