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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: Senator Matthew LaMountain, Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee
Honorable Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

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

Date: March 12, 2026

Re: Concerns Regarding Senate Bill 2144 as Written

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 **concerns regarding Senate Bill 2144 as currently written**. This bill would change statutory standards and funding for Batterers Intervention Programs (BIP's). S-2144 would change the Batterers Intervention Program structure regarding payment of fees to fund the certified programs and regarding required program hours. The bill would change the language of the current statute to read "may" instead of "shall," pertaining to required fees for classes to be paid by court-ordered batterers. It would also leave it fully to the court's discretion regarding how many BIP class hours constitute completion of the program for those pleading to or convicted of domestic violence offenses. Currently, offenders are required by statute to complete 40 contact hours over 20 weeks of state certified BIP classes.

The Batterers Intervention Programs' only source of current funding to conduct these classes is from fees paid by abusive parties who are court mandated to attend them. There is no state funding being invested into operating these programs, although we supported state funding for evidence and outcome-based programming and evaluation when the 2016 Justice Reinvestment package of legislation was being considered. In lieu of state-based funding, without the mandated fees from program participants the programs cannot pay BIP certified facilitators and counselors to lead these classes. They also won't be able to pay rent for training spaces, utilities or other related costs. Guaranteed funding is crucial to the operations of the Batterers Intervention Programs and the uncertainty of payments could hinder the ability of these classes to function successfully.

We are in full support of outcomes-based programming in line with national best practices in domestic violence intervention programs. We join our fellow state partners at the Courts and sitting on the RI BIP Standards Oversight Committee in welcoming evidence-informed promising domestic violence intervention programs and curriculum, and we will continue to support the current exploration of any programs shown to lower reoffending rates, include risk-assessments, culturally-specific programming, and tiered programming based on level of offense. Ultimately this will help families, survivors and their children remain safe and supported after experiencing abuse and violence at home.

The current standards in the BIP statute were based on national best practice standards utilized by other domestic violence intervention programs across the country. All of our state's BIP facilitators are required to uphold these standards under the oversight of the Batterers Intervention Program Standards Oversight Committee (BIPSOC). Without clear structures and evidence-based guidelines to determine who would be required to pay fees and who would not, and how many class hours any given offender must complete, this could lead to the destabilization of this court mandated programming. **Therefore, we respectfully ask to work with Chair LaMountain, this committee and all of our state partners to consider what promising reforms may be needed, while retaining funding stability and evidence-based standards for BIP programming in Rhode Island.**