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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 Joseph McNamara, Chair of the House Education Committee  
Honorable Members of the House Education Committee

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

Date: April 10, 2024

Re: **Opposition to House Bills 7727 and 7781**

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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 **opposition to House Bills 7727 and 7781, legislation that is harmful to the LGBTQ+ community in Rhode Island, including survivors of domestic violence.** H 7727 seeks to target and exclude transgender students by prohibiting them from playing on a school sports team with their friends based on their biological identity at birth. It would also potentially subject any female student athlete to invasive and unnecessary medical exams. H 7781 would threaten schools and teachers with penalties for not complying with vague and risky requirements that would essentially allow any individual parent to dictate school lesson plans, remove teachers' and school staffs' ability to support LGBTQ+ students, and mandate the forced outing of LGBTQ+ students with no regard to their safety.

Ensuring a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment is crucial for the well-being and success of all youth. This is especially true for those who are part of the LGBTQ+ community. When these types of environments are not provided and anti-LGBTQ+ proposed legislation is debated, there are serious negative consequences that effect youth members from this community. Anti-LGBTQ+ discussions create an environment in which many members of this community become vulnerable to acts of bullying/cyberbullying and other forms of victimization and discrimination. These anti-LGBTQ+ education bills interfere with faculty members' ability to address critical issues such as anti-LGBTQ+ and racist bullying, virtually erasing the existence of LGBTQ+ students and families in educational settings. These discussions also have a serious negative impact on the mental health of members of the community, with many expressing increased anxiety and depression. Many members of the LGBTQ+ community avoid seeking medical care even if they are sick or injured due to fear for their safety in these settings. These discussions also negatively impact healthcare providers with many reporting being fearful of providing essential medical care to members of this community due to the fear of being penalized for it. These bills would only increase the many barriers and concerns many members of the LGBTQ+ community already face.

Every survivor of intimate partner violence deserves access to services, safety, and equal treatment. Survivors in the LGBTQ+ community face unique challenges and barriers to safety. In particular, transgender survivors of color experience epidemic rates of violence and increasing hostility. According to the U.S. Transgender Survey, which had more than 27,000 participants from across the country, more than half of transgender respondents reported experiencing intimate partner violence, including acts involving coercive control and physical harm. Nearly half reported experiencing sexual assault.

Domestic and sexual violence prevention organizations and shelter leaders all agree: transgender victims must have the same access to safety and supports as all survivors of intimate partner violence in our communities. When we protect the most underserved, all members of our communities' benefit.

The RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence advocates for ALL survivors; that includes strong protections for LGBTQ+ survivors, youth, and communities who face discrimination and fears for safety on a daily basis.