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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 Marvin Abney, Chair of the House Finance Committee
Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee

From: Lucy Rios, Executive Director
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Date: February 27, 2025

Re: **Support for House Bill 5076 Article 5, Sections 4, 7, and 10**

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 **support Article 5, Sections 4, 7, and 10 in the Governor's proposed budget.** Sections 4 and 7 would apply the 5% hotel tax to whole-home short term rentals, eliminating the tax loophole for these types of rentals that are already applied to hotels, motels, and partial-home short term rentals. Section 10 would increase the real estate conveyance tax on high-value properties (\$800,000) from .92 percent to 1.25 percent. Funds from these taxes would be deposited into the Housing Resources and Homelessness restricted receipt account. If these taxes are passed and imposed have the potential to create \$4.4 million in the last 6 months of FY 2026, and \$8.1 million in new revenue to fund housing and homelessness initiatives. **We strongly encourage the passage of these important tax revenue streams that have the potential to provide a total of \$12.5 million in new revenue to support access to housing and homelessness prevention in the state of Rhode Island.**

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children. No victim of domestic violence should have to choose between staying in an abusive situation or becoming homeless due to a lack of safe, affordable, and fair housing opportunities. In 2023, Rhode Island's domestic violence/sexual assault Helpline and hotlines answered 12,397 calls, many related to questions about safe and affordable housing options. Many of these requests were not able to be met due to the lack of available safe and affordable housing choices for survivors of domestic violence. On a single day in the fall of 2023, Rhode Island victims made 63 requests for services that could not be provided due to a lack of resources at the statewide agencies serving domestic violence victims. **Ninety percent of these unmet requests were specifically for housing and emergency shelter.**

It is critical to our public safety and public health that victims feel safe in their communities. Fair and affordable housing is the foundation of safety. One of the most dangerous times for a victim of domestic violence is when they begin to escape the abuse and fair housing options support victims in their journey to safety. Perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence will often prevent survivors from gaining resources that would allow them to leave. This often leads to survivors staying with the abuser because they do not have the resources and options to leave out of fear of becoming homeless and potentially losing access to so many vital resources to live due to their abuser preventing the victim from gaining those resources. No victims escaping an abusive situation should fear that they will become homeless due to safe and equal housing being denied to them because of the lack of available housing options. Imposing these proposed taxes to generate new funds for housing and homelessness initiative can help to develop more safe options for victims fleeing violence by expanding the opportunities and options for safe and fair housing.

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.¹ Loss of financial stability and housing is a prominent reason that victims are unable to leave an abusive relationship. No victim of domestic violence should remain at risk because of a lack of safe and fair housing opportunities and options.

These measures are essential steps towards addressing the housing and homelessness crisis and providing every Rhode Island resident with a place they can call home. The passage of these key taxes to create new revenue towards housing production and homelessness prevention in Rhode Island is now more important than ever. With the uncertainty of federal funding cuts to housing and homeless programs, it is imperative that the State of Rhode Island take action to provide these critical revenues for housing and homelessness prevention, so every Rhode Islander has the opportunity to be safe and attain housing. With strategic investments and concerted efforts, we can forge a path towards a Rhode Island where housing insecurity is a thing of the past, and every resident has a place to call home.

Thank you for your consideration of House Bill 5076 Article 5, Sections 4, 7, and 10. **We urge the Committee to support this budget article and sections (Article 5, Sections 4, 7, and 10) that are projected to create a total of \$12.5 million in new revenue to go towards housing and homelessness initiatives for Rhode Islanders.**

¹ Intimate partner violence: Consequences. *U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. (2022). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/lastfact.html>