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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 Robert E. Craven, Chair of the House Judiciary Committee
Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee

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

Date: April 1, 2025

Re: **Support for House Bills 5072, 5178, 5441, and 5647**

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 support regarding House Bills 5072, 5178, 5441, and 5647.** H5072- permits those persons with felony convictions, except for those convicted of a crime of violence including domestic violence, to have up to six misdemeanor offenses expunged from their criminal record. H5178- would allow for the expungement of multiple felony convictions for non-violent felonies 10 years after sentence complete. H5441- seeks to reduce the time for expungements for a single misdemeanor and for felonies and multiple misdemeanors. H5647- permits individuals convicted of multiple felonies and misdemeanors to have their records expunged and provide criteria for the court to consider in determining whether the person is of good moral character.

Many folks with convictions records experience difficulties in finding gainful employment, resulting in negative consequences in accessing much needed resources for basic survival and safety. This is especially true for victims of domestic violence. Barriers to viable employment opportunities can be a risk factor for domestic violence in communities. The likelihood of a domestic violence victim experiencing physical abuse or resulting in homicide increases greatly when the abuser is unemployed. Victims are also at an increased risk of experiencing domestic violence when they are unemployed themselves. This often occurs because of the victim's lack of access to resources to escape from lack of gainful employment, making it easier for the abuser to assert power and control.

Unfortunately, all too often survivors are convicted of crimes as a direct result of experiencing domestic violence with an overwhelming number of incarcerated women stating they have experience domestic violence. Many survivors of domestic violence are coerced by their abuser into committing various crimes out of fear of what will happen to them if they don't comply. An abuser may threaten to harm them or their loved ones, restrict their access to vital necessities, among many other methods of power and control. The abusive party will often use a survivor's criminal history against them as well threatening to report them to authorities or place of employment. This type of victimization often results in the loss of housing, income, savings, and other instability. Exempting offenses from the Domestic Violence Prevention Act from being expunged is also important for survivor protection and those who provide services to them. Nonprofit victim-services agencies, such as the agencies within our Coalition network, often need to screen for violent criminal history, or domestic violence history specifically, as these advocates will be working directly with survivors, and their children, who have lived through traumatic harm and violence. When everyone has fair access to employment and livable, equitable wages, the risk factors for intimate partner violence go down, and the protective factors against domestic violence increase.

Thank you for your consideration. We urge you to support this important legislation.