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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, Sr., Chair of the House Judiciary Committee
Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee

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

Date: April 1, 2025

Re: Support for House Bill 5502

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 **support for House Bill 5502**. This bill would change the maximum prison sentence for a misdemeanor offense from one year to 364 days – **making a minor sentencing adjustment for massive immigration justice impact**.

Under immigration law, certain minor convictions that are punishable by a year or more in prison may lead to detention, denial of necessary forms of immigration relief, and deportation for immigrants. By making a one-day change in the definition of “misdemeanor,” this bill would protect hundreds of Rhode Islanders from these unnecessary, harsh immigration consequences.

Immigrant survivors exist at the intersection of interpersonal and state violence, with research suggesting that rates of domestic violence among immigrant communities are higher than the general population.¹ When harsh responses by our criminal legal system are compounded by immigration penalties, survivors of domestic violence are discouraged from seeking safety and justice. A survivor experiencing violence is less likely to access public supports if there are heightened risks that their documentation status or that of their partner may be threatened. Policy efforts, like H. 5502, that recognize the harms of entangled criminal and immigration systems improve conditions so survivors can move towards safety.

As anti-immigrant forces swell at the national level, our state has the power to invest in smart policy solutions that enhance justice and stability for immigrant populations in Rhode Island. Passing this bill is a win-win that enhances criminal and immigrant justice, expanding safety for all communities in our state.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

¹ Morrison, A. M., Campbell, J. K., Sharpless, L., & Martin, S. L. (2024). Intimate partner violence and immigration in the United States: a systematic review. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, 25(1), 846–861. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380231165690>