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**Member Agencies**

Blackstone Valley  
Advocacy Center

Domestic Violence  
Resource Center of  
South County

Elizabeth Buffum  
Chace Center

Sojourner House

Women's Center  
of Rhode Island

Women's Resource Center  
of Newport & Bristol Counties

**Task Force**

Sisters Overcoming  
Abusive Relationships

Dear Narragansett Town Council Members,

Next week, the Town Council is scheduled to consider a proposed ordinance that would allow the Town to recover "police response costs" when police are sent to the site of an alleged "disturbance" in the community. The Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, on behalf of our six member agencies and SOAR, our taskforce of survivors, would like to add our voice to the concerns regarding this ordinance expressed by the ACLU. In addition, we would like you to consider the potential harmful effects for the victims of domestic violence in the Narragansett community.

Domestic violence is a serious problem throughout Rhode Island, and Narragansett is no exception. Thus far in 2011, 106 victims of domestic violence from Narragansett have sought help from various sources, including the police. Domestic violence is a cycle of abusive controlling behavior that can have physical, emotional, and financial factors that make leaving or changing the situation very difficult for the victim. For many victims, the police are the first contact with the systems that will be able to help them find a way out of an abusive situation.

In this ordinance, the "Responsible Party" (who will be liable for the fine) is defined exceedingly broadly: a victim could end up liable for a large fine after police come to her residence and arrest her abuser. Victims of domestic violence face many challenges in leaving their abusive relationship. This ordinance would add one more: a victim might need to pause before calling the police in a dangerous situation to consider whether she could afford their intervention. Neighbors who hear abuse occurring next door might hesitate to call the police for fear of burdening the victim with a fine. Police who have to warn a victim that "the next time you call, we'll have to charge you a fine" will risk losing that victim's trust and the chance to help that family out of a terrible situation.

We hope the Council will take the dynamics of domestic violence and the victims in the Narragansett community into account next week, and reject this ordinance.

Sincerely,

Deborah DeBare  
Executive Director