



Public Testimony (Written)
Judiciary Committee
Re: House Bill 7283 and House Bill 7575
March 22, 2016

Submitted by The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty

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The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty is a coalition of diverse religious communities and advocacy partners throughout the state who have come together to fight poverty

We are submitting written testimony today to voice our organization's support for two bills on today's docket which relate directly to domestic violence concerns: House Bill 7283 *and* House Bill 7575.

We have long-considered stable, safe housing to be a core tenant of any sustainable anti-poverty work. Over the years, we have come to believe ever more strongly that a home cannot be considered sufficiently safe for domestic violence survivors when their abusive intimate partners and/or abusive parents remain fully armed. The understandable worry about one's physical safety creates a climate of fear. In order to flourish, all of us, children especially, need a sustained sense of personal security. In order to achieve a Rhode Island where each and every family has a safe place to call home, we need to strengthen protections against domestic gun violence.

Children and families should feel safe in their own homes. Convicted perpetrators of domestic violence should not remain armed nor should they be able to increase their supplies of weapons and ammunition. Currently, Rhode Island allows people convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors to keep all their weapons and purchase additional guns and ammunition at their own discretion. In addition, those with domestic violence restraining orders are not required to surrender their firearms (it is left to judicial discretion). This creates an understandable climate of fear for many domestic violence survivors, both adults and children.

We call on Rhode Island to enact new domestic violence gun legislation to protect the community and ensure safety at home for all, especially children. As you consider the bills before you, we urge your support for House Bill 7575 and House Bill 7283, both of which address this issue.

Thank you for your service on the committee and for your consideration of this important question.