



National Association of Social Workers

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Date: March 20, 2012
To: Senate Judiciary Committee
From: Rick Harris, LICSW
Re: In opposition to S - 2731

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers – Rhode Island Chapter (NASW - RI), the NASW - RI Board of Directors, and our members, we urge the committee to reject S - 2731. In our opinion, this bill is being submitted with good intentions in an attempt to improve public safety. However we also feel there are some major problems in several areas of this legislation. I have written our concerns outlined in the bullet statements below.

- We feel this bill is extremely broad. Rhode Island already has specific and effective mandatory reporting laws on the books for protected target groups. i.e. children and elderly.
- In many of the areas covered by the “Crime of Violence” definition, we feel the best expert related to involving law enforcement, is the individual themselves. Of course this perspective does not apply to all the areas of that definition. However this law does not distinguish between the various ways a person may present as a victim of a violent crime.
- We believe this law would run asunder with several confidentiality laws between healthcare/mental health/substance abuse provider. We also believe this may violate practice standards as outlined by various affected professional providers.
- I believe if this law is enacted, because of its broadness, law enforcement entities could become overwhelmed by reports, therefore not allowing them to prioritize the most serious situations.
- There is a strong possibility that aspects of this law could be challenged in the court further distressing the state in terms of money and time resources.

Again, we truly appreciate the sentiment of the law, but cannot support implementation as it now stands. We strongly encourage the Committee ***not to*** pass S - 2731 out of committee.

Respectively Submitted,

Rick Harris, LICSW
Executive Director