

Bill: 'An Act Providing Civil Legal Remedies for Victims of Economic Abuse'

HB 1694/SB 1147

7/29/2025

Good afternoon Chair Edwards, Chair Day, and Members of the Committee. My name is Jordan Walker, and I am a Staff Attorney in the Legal Services division of The Second Step. In my role as a Staff Attorney, I provide free legal services for survivors of intimate partner domestic violence throughout the Commonwealth and I am here to testify in support of HB 1694/SB 1147, An Act providing civil legal remedies for victims of economic abuse.

The impacts of economic abuse can be devastating and often play a role in a survivor's decision as to whether to leave an unsafe relationship. As a result of this form of abuse, a survivor may have very limited options in terms of acquiring a credit card, leasing a car, renting their own apartment, and paying for basic necessities. Oftentimes, these are crucial aspects of safely fleeing a violent relationship.

Last year, I worked with a survivor who had recently escaped a 15 year long abusive relationship. She had suffered physical and emotional abuse, in addition to years of economic abuse. When she first came to me, she had successfully fled from the violence but could not escape the debt her abusive husband had forced upon her. Before her marriage, she had good credit, working full-time as a waitress and paying her bills on time. Throughout her relationship, her abusive husband required her to apply for and obtain several credit cards and loans that he dictated through manipulation and lies. Eventually, she accrued almost \$10,000 in debt and she began to receive endless calls from creditors. In May of this year, she went before a bankruptcy Judge and just this week she received her bankruptcy discharge papers.

In speaking with her about this bill and what it would mean for survivors in her situation, she said that she hopes it will help other survivors to put their lives back together without having to make yet another financial decision dictated by their abusers – an option she didn't have.

I respectfully ask that the Committee please report H.1694/S.1147: An Act providing civil legal remedies for victims of economic abuse favorably. Thank you for your time.