June 2025

STANDING FIRM Team News

STANDING FIRM and the Family Care Act Coalition have worked diligently to get the Family Care Act (FCA) passed in PA. The Coalition reports that there is a strong possibility the PA House of Representatives will bring the Family Care Act up for a vote before their summer break at the end of June. If brought for a vote, the FCA is expected to pass due to strong bi-partisan support. When the bill passes, it will then go to the Senate where bi-partisan support for the bill is growing. At this point in time, the bill recognizes victims of violence as qualifying for paid leave.

This bill:

- Would cover nearly all of the state's **more than six million** workers, including the **four million** who currently lack paid family and medical leave from their employer.
- Would give extra breathing room to Pennsylvania workers, who lose **$2 billion** in wages each year when they must take unpaid or partly paid leave and could help the state become a welcoming home for growing families.
- Would **provide** between 12 and 20 weeks of paid leave for workers to bond with a new child, care for a family member, address their own serious health condition, attend to the needs of a military family member, or seek assistance for domestic or sexual violence. People would receive most of their weekly earnings, up to a cap of about $1,350 per week.

Action Steps You Can Take!

- Ask Representative Matt Bradford to bring this bill up for a vote and continue supporting working survivors of IPV. **https://www.pahouse.com/Bradford/**
- Contact your PA representatives and ask them to support this bill and survivors of domestic violence. If you are unsure of who your representatives are you can go to this site and put in your address to find out who to contact: **https://www.palegis.us/find-my-legislator**

PRIDE Month

While we know that IPV can happen to anyone in our community, there are additional risk factors that increase the rate of occurrence and barriers to safety. During Pride Month we would like to reflect on the effects of IPV on members of the LGBTQ+ community and others who are at an increased risk just for being who they are.

- In general, members of the LGBTQ+ community experience IPV (stalking, physical, or sexual violence) near or at a slightly higher rate than heterosexuals, except for people who identify as transgender or bisexual. About 50% of individuals who are transgender and 65% of bisexual women will experience IPV in their lifetime. All community members face barriers to safety due to the stigma, objectification, and community isolation they face, and the lack of or perceived lack of supportive health care providers, law enforcement, or domestic violence agencies. These experiences may be magnified by other identities.
- People of color have higher rates of IPV. Black, Latinx, and Indigenous LGBTQ+ people are particularly vulnerable to violence.
- Survivors who are undocumented may have their status used against them by an abuser. It's important for undocumented survivors to know their rights to protective orders, legal separation

or divorce. There is also the potential for a U-Visa (a nonimmigrant visa that provides legal status and a path to permanent residency for those who are victims of certain crimes (DV, SA, trafficking) and have suffered substantial mental or physical abuse and are willing to assist law enforcement in the investigation/prosecution of those crimes). (1)

To learn more, the National Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Survey 2016/2017 Report on Intimate Partner Violence can be found **here**.
Everyone deserves to live a life free from partner violence: no one is safe until everyone is safe!

The Department of Economic Impact at WC&S

For those new to STANDING FIRM, we brought together our team and the Immediate Needs Coordination team under the **Department of Economic Impact** in January of this year. ***Working together, we aim to improve survivors' financial stability through strategic collaborations, employer engagement, and issue-based advocacy.*** In the words of the Megan Rose, Director of Economic Impact, "It's been exciting refreshing our program to better meet the needs of survivors and respond to the dynamic workplace environment."
It is crucial for employers to grasp how financial and economic abuse affects survivors. By collaborating with STANDING FIRM, they can ensure management and staff receive training to recognize, respond to, and refer individuals to domestic violence agencies such as WC&S, for vital services like safety planning, legal assistance, emergency shelter (if necessary), and support for immediate needs. By implementing appropriate policies and support systems, employers foster a culture of safety, well-being, and support for survivors.

How Financial & Economic Abuse Impacts Survivors

Partner violence (especially against women) has significant economic costs in terms of lost income (for women and families), decreased productivity, and it negatively impacts future earnings potential.
"*Economic abuse encompasses behaviors that control a survivor's "ability to acquire, use, and maintain resources thus threatening [their] economic security and potential for self-sufficiency."* (2)

This abuse is not limited to taking/stealing money from a survivor. Some additional examples of financial abuse include:

- Sabotaging a job (constantly calling or making a survivor miss work altogether).
- Preventing the choice of a career or not allowing a survivor to work.
- Withholding necessities such as shelter, food, medical care/medications, childcare, and/or clothing.
- Preventing use of credit cards or applying for them using the survivor's credit information.
- Rigidly controlling finances.

Recognizing economic abuse is essential, as economic stability serves as a social determinant of health that profoundly impacts the physical and mental well-being and safety of survivors of partner violence.

A study by the **Centers for Financial Security** found that financial abuse occurs in 99% of domestic violence cases. Studies have also shown that coerced debt, financial abuse where an abuser uses coercive control or identity theft to incur debt in someone else's name, may often cause a survivor to become financially dependent, trapping them in abusive relationships and making it more difficult to leave and become economically self-sufficient. This type of abuse also may impact mental and physical health as well as overall quality of life for survivors and their children.

These studies have also identified gaps in research. including the communities of survivors being studied (i.e., survivors with disabilities, those in the LGBTQ+ communities, and the elder population. (3)

Below are key stats that show the impact of financial and economic abuse:

- The cost of intimate partner violence exceeds $8.3 billion per year in the United States.

- Survivors of intimate partner violence lose a total of 8.0 million days of paid work each year.
- Between 21-60% of survivors of intimate partner violence lose their jobs due to reasons stemming from abuse.
- Up to 50% of survivors of intimate partner violence who are employed are harassed at work by their abusive partners.
- Between 2003 and 2008, 142 women were murdered in their workplace by their abuser, which is 78% of women killed in the workplace during that time. Over half of workplace homicides perpetrated by intimate partners occurred in parking lots and public buildings. (4,5)

Ways to Recover from Financial Abuse

- Take financial inventory of assets & liabilities; start setting aside funds in a safe place.
- Avoid using credit and debit cards that allow an abuser to track a survivor.
- Keep personal and financial records in a safe place; consider leaving a copy with a trusted friend or family member or in a safety deposit box.
- Maintain an emergency box that contains copies of important records/documents, and copies of car/house keys, money, and emergency contact list.
- Obtain copies of credit reports from **Annual Credit Report.com** (Equifax, Experian, TransUnion) and report any fraud, disputed claims, or **identity theft**. You can obtain a free copy of your credit reports every 12 months.
- Always clear the browsing history when searching partner violence-related sites.

WC&S partners with the Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) in Allegheny County. The FEC team provides free one-on-one financial coaching tailored to individual goals. Each month, the FEC team answers questions for anyone who wants to learn more about how they help people reach their financial wellness goals. The next session is Wednesday, July 9 from 12-1:00 PM. Register for the virtual session **here**.

For 15 years, STANDING FIRM has provided consultation, training, and resources to employers about the significant role they play in impacting a survivor's economic stability and well-being. To learn more about STANDING FIRM, **contact us** to set up an information session.

Pride Month Book Picks
Rise Above Violence
Domestic Violence Peaks More than Ever for the LGBTQIA+ Community
IRS Identity Theft Guide for Individuals
Federal Trade Commission Consumer Advice
Experian Fraud Alert
Equifax Fraud & Active-Duty Alerts
TransUnion Fraud Alert

Citations

https://lgbtqipvinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Understanding-DV-in-the-LGBTQ-Community-Zine.pdf

2 Adams AE, Sullivan CM, Bybee D, Greeson MR. Development of the scale of economic abuse. Violence Against Women. 2008;14(5):563–588. doi: 10.1177/1077801208315529. [DOI]

3 https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9121607/

4 CDC

5 https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4687019/