



***A conversation that matters: Keeping families and communities healthy and safe***

Dear Friend,

Since starting this campaign, I have held over a dozen roundtables on topics ranging from child welfare and early childhood education, to homelessness and gun violence. The discussions we've had at these roundtables often fill me with hope: our state is full of great people making a difference in the lives of so many Rhode Islanders. Their work has already made our state a better place to live; but there is more we can and must do.

As I have said so many times throughout this campaign, *we need to fix our economy*; but we need to do it in a way that *leaves no one behind*. We need a state government that is socially conscious, forward thinking, and fiscally responsible, all at the same time. One of these values is no less important than the other.

Violence in our communities and in our homes threatens to undermine our economic revitalization. Educational achievement, business creation and workforce participation all suffer when violence festers in our communities. At the same time, a poor economy often exacerbates violence, crime and exploitation, creating a destructive cycle of poverty and stagnation. Today, I want to continue the conversations we've had in our roundtables by introducing a few common sense, pragmatic ideas that will help make our families and communities safer.

As a mother of two children in public schools, the memories of tragedies like Sandy Hook are always in the back of my mind when I drop my kids off in the morning. For our state to prosper, our schools must remain safe, productive environments, where parents and children feel secure. Yet despite important steps being taken by our neighbors, Rhode Island today remains one of the few states in the region without a ban on military-style weapons and high-capacity magazines.

And as a woman, I am always keenly aware of the challenges women face in our economy. Far too often, domestic violence prevents women from actively participating in the workforce. Violence in the home causes women to lose days at work, hurting our economy on the whole. And children who witness domestic violence often struggle in school, handicapping their ability to succeed in the future.

Finally, it is time for our state to demonstrate that we will no longer tolerate sexual exploitation and trafficking. Here in Providence, we know first hand what happens when we fail to address this problem. Without a real, coordinated effort to fight human trafficking, our capital city will continue to be a haven for sexual exploitation.

If our state is going to prosper, we must simultaneously improve our economy and *make our communities safer*. I recently announced plans to launch an Office of Economic Empowerment, because I believe that our state government plays a major role in ensuring access to opportunity and security. While we all work to revitalize our economy, our state must ensure that the playing

field is level for all Rhode Islanders, no matter their backgrounds, incomes or origins, and it must ensure that our schools, neighborhoods and homes are safe for our families.

The Office of Economic Empowerment will be an initiative within the governor's office that will focus on ending poverty and ensuring opportunity. Part of this focus includes taking action to curb domestic violence, gun violence and human trafficking.

Conversations around violence can be difficult, but we must make them a priority. Teaching nonviolence in our schools and having meaningful conversations about changing our culture toward violence must be a part of our approach to making our communities safe.

As a mom, I am committed to issues of family safety. I understand that there is no single solution to ending violence. It will take the entire community to work across all fronts from prevention and data collection to cultural change and to supporting those that are trying to rebuild their lives. But today, I'd like to talk about a few common-sense ideas that have been discussed throughout my roundtable discussions.

These ideas are just the beginning of a conversation that we must continue to have throughout the course of the campaign, and throughout my time as governor. Many of these proposals focus on *understanding* the violence we face as a state. I have always believed that in order to tackle a problem, we need to understand *what it is* first – and many of these ideas reflect that belief. But I am convinced that if we can take these steps now, we can make our families, our communities, and our state safer, and position ourselves for prosperity in the years to come

Gina

### **Gun Safety**

It seems like every day brings news of more gun violence in our cities. Gun violence is a public health issue, and as such demands a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, training and behavior health considerations. But there are measures that we can and should implement now to prevent guns from ending up in the hands of those who may use them for harm:

- **Ban the sale and purchase of military-style weapons.** Rhode Island is the only state between New York and Boston that has yet to implement a ban on military-style weapons.
- **Ban the sale and purchase of high-capacity magazines.** The legislature has limited the number of rounds when deer hunting to five and the number of rounds when duck hunting to three. If we are willing to limit rounds to protect our wildlife, we surely can limit rounds to protect our children.
- **Enact and enforce criminal penalties against persons who buy or procure a gun for someone who is not legally permitted to own or possess a firearm.** At least nine states have laws that allow for the prosecution of persons who procure guns for and/or facilitate the purchase of firearms for individuals otherwise prohibited from owning or a possessing a gun in that state.
- **Require that all guns sold in Rhode Island be equipped with safety mechanisms.** Currently, Rhode Island law only requires that locks must accompany handguns sold by a *dealer*.
- **Require that all firearms be stored with a lock in place.** Massachusetts is the only state that requires that gun owners to store all firearms with a lock in place. California, Connecticut, and New York require this under certain circumstances.

## **Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence is an issue that touches all Rhode Islanders. Children who witness domestic violence in their homes are more likely to have health and learning challenges. They are more likely to struggle in school, and are prone to becoming perpetrators of domestic violence as adults.<sup>1</sup> And domestic violence has an impact on our economy as well: the CDC estimates that victims of domestic violence lose almost 8 million collective days of work, which is equal to more than 32,000 full time jobs and almost 5.6 million days of household productivity.<sup>2</sup> There are a number of pragmatic steps we can take now to begin supporting women who are victims of domestic violence, and help prevent it in the future, such as:

- **Supporting the Critical Case Review Team**, a group of prosecutors, victim service providers and law enforcement officers dedicated to understanding cases and helping prevent escalation and domestic violence.
- **Working with courts, law enforcement, and other state and non-profit agencies to better use technology to meet the needs of the victims of domestic violence**, and break down silos between government agencies and service providers.
- **Enhancing TDI leave for victims of domestic violence** to allow them to obtain medical attention or attend court.
- **Requiring cultural competency training for all court personnel**, including judges, for victims of domestic violence.

## **Human Trafficking**

In 2009, community advocates and law enforcement came together with legislative leaders to pass several laws related to stopping human trafficking in Rhode Island. However, more work remains to protect women and girls in our state. We can start by:

- **Convening the working group on trafficking that was created in 2009, but has never met.** Government has a role to play in bringing together all stakeholders to have meaningful dialogue about the various ways to work together to tackle and stop human trafficking and protect women and girls.
- **Implementing law enforcement reporting requirements passed in 2009** By gathering data at the local level for prostitution-related arrests, we can improve analysis to help inform statewide policymaking and support the day-to-day work of state and community agencies and law enforcement.
- **Working with cities and towns to explore implementing a “one-strike rule” to close establishments in which prostitution is found to be occurring.**

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<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island Kids Count 2014 Factbook

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States