

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

MAKE IT EASIER FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS TO CANCEL SHARED PHONE AND TV CONTRACTS

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The New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) urges the New York State Legislature to pass legislation simplifying the process for DV victims to cancel shared telephone and cable contracts, removing a major barrier victims face when breaking free from an abuser.

Currently in New York State, when canceling bundled or multi-family telephone and cable contracts, DV victims must provide a valid DV incident report, police report, order of protection, or a signed affidavit from a third party attesting to the individual's status as a DV victim. This is a burdensome process for domestic violence victims, especially as many do not want to involve the criminal justice system.

Instead, this legislation would permit DV victims to provide a self-attestation in writing of their eligibility as a victim to obtain the accommodation. Similarly, the bill permits DV victims to provide a self-attestation to phone companies to obtain a modified or alternative name for phone listings or to get fees waived to obtain a non-published phone listing.

The bill would restrict telecommunications companies from asking DV survivors to disclose confidential information relating to their status as a DV victim as a condition of applying for the accommodations. Further, the TV and phone companies would be prohibited from setting restrictive conditions, such as requiring that account arrears be paid, prohibiting DV victims from obtaining a new phone number, or requiring approval of the contract separation by the primary account holder.

This legislation amends the Public Service Law and General Business Law to:

- Allow DV victims to provide an attestation in writing of their eligibility to break family or bundled telephone and cable contracts;
- Require phone and cable companies to provide the accommodation within 7 days of receiving a written request;
- Require phone and cable companies to dispose of victim information within 30 days of receipt and in a manner that preserves the applicant's confidentiality; and,
- Require telephone, cable, and satellite television companies to make information about these accommodations available to consumers on their website, on mobile apps, in physical stores, and in other consumer communications.

ABOUT NYSCADV:

Established in 1978, NYSCADV is designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the information clearinghouse, primary point of contact, and resource center on domestic violence for the State of New York. NYSCADV is responsible for supporting the development of policies, protocol, and procedures to enhance domestic violence intervention and prevention and also provides education and technical assistance to the network of primary-purpose domestic violence service providers statewide.

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