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Maryland Legal Aid and Texas Advocacy Project Applauds Supreme Court Ruling in USA vs Rahimi

BALTIMORE, MD, JUNE 21, 2024 – Today, the Supreme Court of the United States delivered a ruling in the case of USA vs Rahimi, upholding the constitutionality of 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(8), which prohibits individuals subject to domestic-violence restraining orders from possessing firearms. This case originated in Texas, highlighting the state's pivotal role in shaping national policy on domestic violence.

- *Two-thirds of women killed by an intimate partner are killed with a gun.*¹
- *Access to a gun makes it 5x more likely that a woman will die at the hands of a domestic abuser.*²
- *Every month, an average of 70 women are shot and killed by an intimate partner.*³

We commend the Court for its decision, which prioritizes the safety and protection of domestic violence survivors across the nation. This ruling reaffirms the critical importance of firearm restrictions for individuals who pose a significant threat to their intimate partners. Restraining orders are a vital tool in safeguarding victims of domestic violence, and the prohibition on firearm possession by abusers under these orders is an essential component of these protections.

In 2023, Maryland Legal Aid joined Texas Advocacy Project and a coalition* of dedicated non-profit organizations across the nation in proudly filing an [amicus brief](#) in US v. Rahimi to advocate for the safety and protection of domestic violence survivors through appropriate firearm regulations. The brief, submitted to the Supreme Court of the United States, addressed the Fifth Circuit's ruling and emphasized the importance of preventing individuals who have committed or threatened family violence from accessing firearms during the period they are under a protective order.

"We are immensely grateful for the Supreme Court's recognition of the inherent dangers faced by domestic violence survivors," said Heather Bellino, Chief Executive Officer of Texas Advocacy Project. "In Texas, where the intersection of domestic violence and firearm access is a pressing issue, this decision is crucial. It ensures that those who have been deemed a threat cannot possess firearms, thereby reducing the risk of further harm or fatality."

Bronwyn Blake, Chief Legal Officer of Texas Advocacy Project, added, "This ruling is a monumental step forward in protecting the lives of domestic violence survivors in Texas and beyond. It underscores the



PRESS RELEASE



necessity of strong legal measures to prevent abusers from accessing firearms, which are too often used to perpetuate violence. Our commitment to providing legal and social services to those in need remains unwavering."

Amee Vora, Advocacy Director for Family Law of Maryland Legal Aid shared, "Maryland Legal Aid is thrilled that the Supreme Court has upheld laws requiring perpetrators of domestic violence to surrender their firearms after a restraining order is entered against them. The link between firearms and domestic violence is undeniable and deadly. The countless survivors of domestic violence we represent have long relied on the firearm removal provisions of protective orders in their pursuit of safety, and we are thankful that they will continue to benefit from these laws."

The intersection of domestic violence and firearm access is well-documented, with numerous studies⁴ showing a significant increase in the likelihood of homicide when abusers have access to guns. Today's ruling is a crucial step in our ongoing efforts to protect survivors and prevent domestic violence-related fatalities.

We urge state and federal lawmakers to build on this victory by strengthening laws and resources aimed at preventing domestic violence and supporting survivors. Together, we can create a safer and more just society for all.

About Texas Advocacy Project: Since its beginning in 1982 as a legal hotline, Texas Advocacy Project (TAP) has evolved into an expert on legal and social issues affecting survivors of power-based abuse. TAP strives to end dating and domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, stalking, and human trafficking in Texas. TAP empowers survivors through free legal and social services and access to the justice system, and advances prevention through public outreach and education. Our vision is that all Texans live free from abuse. In 2023, TAP provided legal and social services in 4,989 cases, serving 11,047 Texans. If you or someone you know needs help, call 800-374-HOPE or visit TexasAdvocacyProject.org.

***The Coalition** is comprised of the following dedicated nonprofits across the country: Atlanta Legal Aid Society, Inc., Bay Area Legal Aid, Central California Legal Services, Community Legal Aid SoCal, Eastside Legal Assistance Program, Georgia Legal Services Program, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Indiana Health Advocacy Coalition, Indiana Legal Services, Inc., Law Foundation of Silicon Valley, Legal Aid of Arkansas, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas, Legal Aid Society of San Diego, Legal Services of Northern Virginia, Los Angeles Center of Law and Justice, Maryland Legal Aid, New Haven Legal Assistance Association, OneJustice, SAFE Alliance, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services Corporation, Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc., Texas Advocacy Project, Texas Legal Services Center, University of Texas School of Law Domestic Violence Clinic, Virginia Poverty Law Center.

About Maryland Legal Aid: Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) is a statewide private, nonprofit law firm that provides free, civil legal services to low-income and vulnerable people to address their most fundamental legal problems. From its 12 offices around the state and through its many community-based clinics, we help our clients preserve and access safe and affordable housing, maintain custody of their children, and be safe from domestic violence. MLA increases our clients' economic security by defending against consumer debt, including foreclosures and tax sales, removing barriers to employment, and accessing critical income supports such as unemployment, food stamps and other vital public benefits. Through special projects, we represent seniors, nursing home residents, children in alleged abuse and neglect cases, migrant farmworkers, and those in mental health institutions. In its advocacy, MLA seeks systemic change through impact litigation, policy advocacy, and by telling our clients' compelling stories.