

January 27, 2026

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara,  
Chair  
House Education Committee  
Rhode Island Statehouse  
Providence, 02903



**RE: Testimony in support of BILL H7026 – Relating to Education, The Nathan Bruno and Jason Flatt Act**

**Sojourner House is in strong support of House bill H7026 with a recommendation for additional considerations.** H7026 aligns with our commitment of supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence (DV/SV). As a prominent non-profit organization in Rhode Island serving over 5,000 clients in almost every city and town across our state, we are well positioned to speak to the needs of survivors of domestic and sexual violence and the importance of **H7026** in attempting to address some of those needs.

The proposed bill H7026 would require middle and high schools under the Rhode Island Department of Education purview to provide contacts to national or state hotlines for suicide prevention and substance abuse crisis on the back of all student and staff school identification cards. **We urge the House Education Committee to support H7026 and to ADD state or national hotlines/text-lines that support young people experiencing teen dating violence and/or family violence.**

Physical dating violence is experienced by about 1 in 12 teens and sexual dating violence is experienced by about 1 in 10 teens and these rates increase even more among women, LGBTQ+ students, and students questioning their gender identity<sup>i</sup>. Additionally, in Rhode Island 26% of children in 2022 were present for domestic violence incidents<sup>ii</sup>. Being present in instances of domestic violence increases negative physical, psychological, and relational outcomes among children<sup>ii</sup>. **With these statistics in mind, we support H7026 but recommend adding teen dating violence and family violence contacts to middle and high school children's school identification cards.** Further, we recommend that considering the inclusion of hotlines that allow for text messaging and phone support given more than 75% of people under the age of 25 use text hotlines rather than call for support<sup>iii</sup>. Text lines also allow for greater flexibility in seeking support (e.g., in the presence of an abuser).

On behalf of Sojourner House, one of Rhode Island's leading domestic and sexual violence non-profit organizations, we respectfully urge you to support House bill H7026 and make the requested changes to combat and support Rhode Island school-aged youth experiencing teen dating violence and family violence.

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- ii The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2025). *Teen dating violence*. <https://www.cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence/about/about-teen-dating-violence.html>
- ii Rhode Island Kids Count (RICC). (2024). *Children witnessing domestic violence*. [https://rikidscount.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/children-witnessing-domestic-violence\\_2024fb.pdf](https://rikidscount.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/children-witnessing-domestic-violence_2024fb.pdf)
- iii Pisani, A. R., Gould, M. S., Gallo, C., Ertefaie, A., Kelberman, C., Harrington, D., Weller, D., & Green, S. (2022). Individuals who text crisis text line: Key characteristics and opportunities for suicide prevention. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 52, 567-582. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.12872>