

Dear Chair Abney, House Finance Committee

RE: In support of VICTIM Act

My name is Linzi Rae Matta, I am an LICSW and live in Representative Furtado's district. I'm writing today in strong support of the VICTIM Act (H5390) which would invest much needed state funds in victim service programs.

I am the Clinical Director at Sojourner House, a local non-profit victims services agency who provides shelter, housing, and supportive services to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. I have been in this position, which I consider my dream job, since April 2022. I have spent the last 13 years dedicating my career to supporting survivors of violence, including obtaining my Master's degree in Social Work with a specialty in trauma informed treatment modalities. I have worked for multiple local victim service agencies over the course of my career and have seen first hand the needs of the community and the passion and dedication of my colleagues in the field to provide holistic support.

Besides the consistency of the need for services, especially in this increasingly stressful society we live in, the most prevalent constant in my career has been the lack of ability to support survivors fully.

- There are not enough shelter beds for the parents and their children who are fleeing their abuser swiftly, as leaving an abusive relationship is considered one of the most dangerous times for escalated violence.
- There are not enough easy pathways to more stable housing, a basic need that survivors can build the rest of their lives on.
- There are not enough clinical services for survivors of violence who need to process their traumatic memories while trying to navigate complex systems and scrambling to gain safety, food security, employment, community connections, and healthy relationships with themselves and others.

We are doing a lot with a little, which we are used to, but is not enough.

At Sojourner House, we have three full-time clinicians and a part-time substance use clinician, who all provide free of charge services to folks in our programs. We are currently maxed out with our caseloads and now have to run a waitlist, which means that survivors of trauma are not able to access the relief they need and deserve to move through some of the most challenging times of their lives.

Resources are not everything, money is not going to solve these issues in the way they really need to be viewed and solved. While we work to address systemic issues of violence, we need adequate financial support for our work with victims.

I've worked alongside folks throughout my career who are tirelessly committed to the mission of supporting survivors. The passion, dedication, and expertise is there. What we need now is for

the state to step up and pass the VICTIM act so we know that the Rhode Island government is with us in these efforts.

Please pass H5390 to ensure victims have the support they need and deserve.

Thank you,

Linzi Rae Matta, LICSW