

Chairman Marvin Abney
House Finance Committee
RI State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony in support of H5390

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the committee,

I am writing in strong support of Representative Craven's bill H5390, the Victims of Crime Trauma Informed Mobilization (VICTIM) Act.

My name is Saribel Cruz, and I serve as the Director of Housing Stabilization at Sojourner House. In my role, I oversee programs that help survivors of domestic violence and their families access safe, stable housing. Our team works closely with clients to navigate complex housing systems, secure rental assistance, and ensure they have the resources they need to rebuild their lives. I live here in Providence, and I'm deeply committed to this community and the people we serve.

Victim services are not just helpful they are essential. Survivors often leave everything behind to escape abuse: their homes, belongings, financial stability, and sometimes their support networks. Without services like those provided by Sojourner House, many would have nowhere to go. I remember working with a mother of three who had fled a violent partner. Because of our support, she was able to move into her own unit through our Rapid Rehousing Program, access counseling, and eventually secure a full-time job. Today, she and her children are thriving in their own apartment. That's the impact our work can have.

Unfortunately, our resources are stretched thin. The need is growing, but the funding has not kept pace. Just last month, I had to turn away a survivor in crisis because we had no available shelter beds. She had nowhere safe to go that night. I can't express how heartbreaking that moment was for her, and for us.

Federal funding cuts would have devastating consequences. We are currently assisting a client who depends on our rental assistance to keep her apartment. She has made tremendous progress, but without continued support, she could end up homeless again. Another client, a single father of one, relies on our grocery assistance each month while he works toward permanent employment. These are not just numbers these are real people, working hard to survive and rebuild.

At Sojourner House, we do everything we can to stretch every dollar, but the reality is clear: we need greater funding to continue meeting the rising demand. Survivors deserve more than a chance they deserve stability, dignity, and a future free from violence.

Please pass the Victims of Crime Trauma Informed Mobilization Act this year.

Thank you for your time and review of this testimony. Please contact me at 401.437.8086 if you have any questions about our work or this testimony.

Thank you for your time and support.

Saribel Cruz

Director of Housing Stabilization

Sojourner House