

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 Veronicka Vega and I'm one of the newest board members on the Sojourner House Board of Directors. I've been a resident of Woonsocket for 12 years and I'm an alum of Woonsocket High School.

Victim services are essential in my community because of the sheer demand for the services. Woonsocket had the highest number of felony domestic violence cases per capita between 2016 and 2022. Erika Belcourt, Tanya Gagnon, and Michelle Benvenuti all come to mind as victims of domestic violence who unfortunately did not survive. If victim service agencies like Sojourner House are adequately funded and staffed, they would be able to help victims when they need to flee violence, find housing, get access to medical or mental health services, all in one place.

In my time on the board of directors for Sojourner House, I've heard a lot about how the federal funding cuts could affect the organization. Programs will be removed, people will lose their jobs, and staff is going to have to continue doing the work with less resources. It's unfair to the staff that works hard everyday to provide services to people in their most vulnerable time of need and it's unfair to the victims.

Rhode Island needs to follow the lead of other states who have allocated funding in the state budget for victim services.

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 vegaveronicka@gmail.com if you have any questions about our work or this testimony.

Sincerely,

Veronicka Vega
85 W Park Pl, Woonsocket