



Memo To: House Finance Committee

From: Kelly Nevins, Chief Executive Officer

Date: May 22, 2025

Concerns: **SUPPORTS H5323 - \$500,000 Appropriation to Sojourner House**

On behalf of the Women's Fund of Rhode Island, I am writing in strong support of H5323, which would appropriate \$500,000 in state funding to Sojourner House. As an organization committed to advancing gender equity through systemic change, we know that access to safe, affordable housing is one of the most pressing barriers to stability and opportunity for women and families—particularly for those escaping domestic violence.

Rhode Island is in the midst of a housing crisis. The shortage of affordable units, coupled with rising costs and stagnant wages, has left many families at risk of homelessness. For survivors of domestic violence, this crisis is even more acute. Without a safe place to go, many are forced to remain in dangerous situations or face the uncertainty of shelters and temporary arrangements.

Sojourner House is the only domestic violence organization in Rhode Island that has responded to this crisis by creating affordable housing specifically for victims. Over the past five years, they have developed or secured more than 175 units of permanent supportive housing—ensuring that survivors have not only shelter but stability and dignity as they rebuild their lives.

This appropriation is more than just a contribution to an effective nonprofit—it is an investment in a proven, long-term solution to both the housing and domestic violence crises. In 2024 alone, Sojourner House served nearly 2,000 victims in 33 cities and towns across the state. Their trauma-informed services, paired with access to housing, provide a pathway to healing and economic security for individuals who might otherwise be left behind.

Additionally, more than 80% of Sojourner House's funding comes from federal sources that require matching funds. By allocating \$500,000, Rhode Island can leverage federal dollars, expand housing access, and ensure no survivor is turned away simply because there is nowhere to go.

We urge the Finance Committee to support H5323 and help Rhode Island take meaningful action to address both violence and housing insecurity. Safe housing is foundational to safety, health, and opportunity. This bill is a step toward ensuring it is within reach for those who need it most.

Women's Fund of Rhode Island is proud to provide data-driven policy research to achieve gender equity in our state. You can learn more about our Women's Well-Being Index and reports at www.wfri.org/research.