



May 21, 2025

Representative Marvin Abney, Chair

House Finance Committee

Rhode Island State House

Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 5323: Joint Resolution Making an Appropriation of  
\$500,000 to Sojourner House in Rhode Island**

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we express our support for House Bill 5323, which recognizes the essential role of the nonprofit sector in strengthening communities and ensuring that all Rhode Islanders have what they need to reach their fullest potential. Through our INVEST UNITED initiative, we are committed to ensuring the sustainability, growth, and impact of Rhode Island's nonprofit organizations, which provide critical services across multiple areas of our LIVE UNITED 2025 Strategic Plan, including economic mobility, workforce development, education, housing, healthcare, and civic engagement.

House Bill 5323 is critical to supporting the long-term viability of Sojourner House, which has supported thousands of victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and human trafficking for 48 years. Their services include support groups, shelter, housing, sexual health advocacy, and emotional support. Much of their critical work is supporting families' transition to safe housing, which is why they began developing housing five years ago. Since then, Sojourner House has built a robust permanent supportive housing program for survivors, including over 175 units statewide.

Sojourner House is the only organization in Rhode Island creating affordable housing for victims. In 2024, they assisted nearly 2,000 victims from 33 Rhode Island cities and towns. This is vital work that faces a challenging federal funding climate, with 80% of their funding coming from federal sources. The state of Rhode Island directs state dollars to Sojourner House to make sure supportive housing services are delivered to victims who need safety and stability. Domestic violence is a frequent cause of housing instability that leads to devastating consequences for an individual and family's health and

**Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders**

well-being, which compromises United Way's mission to improve economic and social conditions for Rhode Islanders.

A thriving nonprofit sector is crucial for the responsive and effective delivery of state services in Rhode Island. House Bill 5323 supports Sojourner House in its mission to promote healthy relationships by providing culturally sensitive support, advocacy, housing, and education for victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. We urge you to support this resolution to sustain and grow their work and this vital sector.

Sincerely,

Peggy Desjarlais

Housing and Economic Development Policy, United Way of Rhode Island