



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

May 22, 2025

Re: Testimony in support of H5323

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the committee,

I write in strong support Representative Casey's Joint Resolution to Support Sojourner House, H5323.

For 48 years, Sojourner House, a non-profit based in Providence but now providing services across the state, has served thousands of victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and human trafficking. We offer wraparound services such as support groups, emergency shelter, transitional and permanent supportive housing, sexual health advocacy, and emotional support. In 2024, Sojourner House helped nearly 2,000 victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking from 33 different RI cities and towns.

Five years ago, recognizing the shortage of affordable housing in our community, Sojourner House made the decision to begin housing development work of our own. Since then, we've made five real estate transactions and currently own or lease over 175 units statewide. This allows us to provide permanent supportive housing to victims, as we know this is the most effective way to help victims and their families transition out of very dangerous situations into safety.

Our comprehensive permanent supportive housing program and a rapid rehousing program provide critical, life-saving support to families who have experienced abuse. These programs, which include units across 33 cities and towns, help families rebuild their lives. We are the only victim service organization in Rhode Island developing affording housing.

386 Smith Street | Providence, RI 02908

Drop-in Center: 401.861.6191 | Fax: 401.861.6157 | Housing Office: 401.808.6889

Helplines: 401.765.3232 | 401.658.4334 | Web: www.sojournerri.org



Sojourner House receives more than 80% of its funding from federal sources, and most of those sources require that the organization finds a way to match their contribution.

While we have scraped together matching dollars so far, we are running out of places to find matching funds. Our work helps the state meet its affordable housing goals and so we are seeking a partnership with the State to secure matching funds for these federal grants, ensuring that we can continue to provide supportive housing and life-saving care to victims in Rhode Island. **This is a smart return on investment. Please support this \$500,000 allocation for Sojourner House.**

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

Sincerely,

Vanessa Volz
President and CEO