

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

May 20, 2025

Re: Testimony in support of H5323

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the committee,

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

My name is Carrie McPherson. I am a lifelong Rhode Islander, active member of the community, graduate of URI, Foster resident, mother of two, taxpayer and happen to also be a survivor of domestic violence. I have served on the finance committee for Sojourner House since 2020 and joined their Board of Directors in 2024. I am also a supporter and donor of this most worthy cause, and give throughout the year as possible.

I feel it is our duty to protect those in need in Rhode Island and provide them with resources that allow them to not only survive but also thrive in this small yet mighty state.

When I was undergoing my 10 year ordeal of abuse, I felt hopeless on a daily basis. Stuck in my situation. Unable to move ahead and focus on my future because I was constantly worried and frankly terrified of what I would encounter when I arrived home after returning from the two jobs I worked to ensure my family had a roof over their heads, health insurance and food in our bellies. It took me years to get the courage to file for divorce because I was convinced on a daily basis that I was worthless and would never amount to anything, even though I was a college graduate and one of the hardest working people I knew. The crazy thing is, I believed it. Only after much heartache, mental health challenges, and with the support of colleagues and family, I gained the courage and ability to leave this relationship. I was young, and was unaware that there were services out there that could have helped me escape sooner.

In allocating these critical resources, it serves as a commitment that we care about our residents and constituents and it also serves as an investment in the growth of our communities while providing hope, care and guidance to a group of individuals and families that have no one else to turn to. Supporting victim services strengthens our fellow Rhode Islanders and gives them the resources and the space necessary to heal and overcome the incredibly challenging obstacles that have served as a barrier, frankly a brick wall, just by fighting to survive.

Funding the support and programs provided by Sojourner House serves as a lifeline during a period of all-consuming despair that we have the ability to help mitigate. I fear for our communities should cuts to these critical services come to pass. Continued violence and

removing hope becomes pervasive and sadly causes some to lose their lives due to domestic violence. I support Sojourner House serving our victim communities because I believe that everyone should have access to a safe home environment. We owe it to those who count on us the most to provide this allocation to them, our future.

For over 49 years, Sojourner House, a Providence-based non-profit now serving all of Rhode Island, has supported thousands of victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and human trafficking. They offer services like support groups, shelter, permanent housing, sexual health advocacy, and emotional support. In 2024, they assisted nearly 2,000 victims from 33 RI cities and towns.

Five years ago, recognizing the need for affordable housing, Sojourner House began developing housing and now owns or leases over 175 units statewide, providing permanent supportive housing to victims. This is the most effective way to help families transition to safety. Sojourner House is the only organization in Rhode Island creating affordable housing for victims. They receive over 80% of their funding from federal sources, most of which require matching funds. It's time for Rhode Island to provide matching funds to ensure Sojourner House can continue its vital work.

This is a smart return on investment and is helping Rhode Island meet its low-income housing goals. Please support this \$500,000 allocation for Sojourner House.

Thank you for your consideration!

Carrie A. McPherson