

Chair Matthew L. LaMountain
Senate Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House

April 30, 2026



RE: Testimony in support of BILL H7052 – Relating to Education, Rhode Island Promise Scholarship

Sojourner House is in **strong support of House bill 7052** which aligns with our commitment of supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence (DV/SV). As a prominent non-profit organization in Rhode Island serving over 5,000 clients in almost every city and town across our state, we are well positioned to speak to the needs of survivors of domestic and sexual violence and the importance of H7010 in attempting to address some of those needs.

The proposed bill H7026 would expand access to the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship to those pursuing certificate degrees rather than just associate's degrees at the community college of Rhode Island thus expanding the people who could benefit from the scholarship.

Domestic violence is most common among women, lower-income households, and in lower-income neighborhoods where economic resources are already scarce where 94-99% have also been economically victimized by abusive partners.^{i,ii,iii,iv,v,vi,vii,viii} As a result, these women often have a harder time gaining economic independence; instead, they are left choosing between staying in an abusive relationship or leaving with little to no resources to sustain themselves and their children.^{i,ii,ix}

Researchers suggest the necessity of increasing access to higher education opportunities for people from lower-income backgrounds given that higher education can be an essential vehicle for upward class mobility.^x Further, research on domestic violence survivors suggests that pursuing higher education can be a powerful source to maintaining survivorship however, survivors face barriers related to affordability and childcare support in this pursuit.^{xi,xii} When survivors are able to access higher education, they often find it a source of great personal achievement and experience significant growth in their confidence. Therefore, expanding the types of higher education training covered by the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship would expand opportunities to economic independence and sustainability among survivors of domestic violence.

On behalf of Sojourner House, one of Rhode Island's leading domestic and sexual violence non-profit organizations, we respectfully urge you to **support** House bill 7052 expanding access to the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship.

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- ⁱ Ahmadabadi, Z., Najman, J. M., Williams, G. M., & Clavarino, A. M. (2020). Income, gender, and forms of intimate partner violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 35(23-24), 5500-5525. <https://doi.org/10.1177/088626051771954160.3.1.59>
- ⁱⁱ Bonomi, A. E., Trabert, B., Anderson, M. L., Kernic, M. A., & Holt, V. L. (2014). Intimate partner violence and neighborhood income: A longitudinal analysis. *Violence Against Women*, 20(1), 42-58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801213520580>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Community Housing Network (2023, October 30). Domestic violence survivors face a silent crisis due to lack of affordable housing. <https://communityhousingnetwork.org/domestic-violence-survivors-face-a-silent-crisis-due-to-lack-of-affordable-housing/>
- ^{iv} Huecker, M. R., King, K. C., Jordan, G. A., & Smock, W. (2023). Domestic violence. *Statpearls*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK499891/>
- ^v Iyengar, R. & Sabik, L. (2009). The dangerous shortage of domestic violence services. *Health Affairs*, 28(6), w1052-w1065. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.28.6.w1052>
- ^{vi} World Health Organization (2024, March 25). Violence against women. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>
- ^{vii} Fanning, P. (n.d.). Recognizing financial abuse: A growing weapon in intimate partner violence. University of Maryland School of Social Work. <https://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/fall-2024-connections/alumni-and-faculty-making-an-impact-in-ipv/recognizing-financial-abuse-a-growing-weapon-in-intimate-partner-violence/>
- ^{viii} National Network to End Domestic Violence (n.d.). About financial abuse. <https://nnedv.org/content/about-financial-abuse/>
- ^{ix} Bullock, H. E., Reppond, H. A., Truong, S. V., & Singh, M. R. (2020). An intersectional analysis of the feminization of homelessness and mothers' housing precarity. *Journal of Social Issues*, 76, 835-858. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12406>
- ^x Haverman, R. H. & Smeeding, T. M. (2006). The role of higher education in social mobility. *The Future of Children*, 16(2), 125-150. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2006.0015>
- ^{xi} Best, R. K. (2025). *Strategies for intimate partner and domestic violence survivorship*. [Doctoral Dissertation, Walden University]. <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/17761/>
- ^{xii} Morgan, A. (2007). 'You're nothing without me!': The positive role of education in regaining self-worth and 'moving on' for survivors of domestic abuse. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 12(2), 241-258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13596740701387510>