

Chairman Marvin L. Abney
House Finance Committee
RI State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903
Re: Testimony in support of H7324

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the committee,

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

For 50 years, Sojourner House, a Providence-based non-profit now serving all of Rhode Island, has supported over 60,000 victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and human trafficking. They offer services like support groups, shelter, housing, sexual health advocacy, and emotional support. Last year, they assisted over 5,000 victims across the state.

My name is Alexis Marie. I have worked with Sojourner House since February of 2024. I previously worked as a Residential Advocate in our family emergency shelter. In February of 2026, I was fortunate to become the coordinator for our RISE program. During my time with Sojourner House, I have had the pleasure of working with individuals by providing emergency shelter and supportive services for LGBTQ+ survivors and male identifying survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking throughout Rhode Island. These services have helped secure housing and stability for individuals to regroup, refocus, and progress towards rebuilding their lives.

As an LGBTQ+ individual, a single parent, and survivor of domestic violence, I have experienced discrimination and bias when seeking services. From my time with Sojourner House, I have been fortunate to work with an agency that respects individuals of all backgrounds. I have found through my own experience how critical competent services and providing a safe space for at-risk individuals is. LGBTQ+ individuals can face discrimination in various aspects of life such as housing, education, public accommodations, unfavorable treatment, microaggressions, among many other key areas of life. Our program has been able to provide that space for these individuals when they feel there are no other options left for them. I have had the chance to work closely with people and observe their growth.

I believe that any individual should not face barriers, stigma, or inadequate care, let alone people in marginalized communities. With more funding, we will be able to continue to provide these services, ensuring that individuals will receive respectful, compassionate, and culturally affirming services without fear of bias and/or discrimination. We will have the capacity to produce more shelter space, stronger services, and housing options. We will be able to support people with mental health, housing, case management, allowing them stability to live a proactive and healthy quality of life.

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.

Sincerely,

Alexis Marie
Sojourner House, RISE Coordinator