

Chair Marvin Abney

House Senate Committee

Rhode Island State House

**Re: Testimony in support of H7324**

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the committee,

My name is Gina Pellicano and I am writing in strong support of Representative Casey's Joint Resolution to Support Sojourner House.

I am a Certified Public Accountant and currently serve as the Board Treasurer for Sojourner House. Since getting involved with the Organization in 2021, I have personally seen the needs of the community continue to increase, all while resources become more and more limited. As Treasurer, I am acutely aware of the significant impact this \$500,000 allocation would have on the Organization and the community at large. If we are allocated these funds, we will ensure they will be used prudently and in full support of our mission.

By way of background, Sojourner House is a Rhode Island not-for-profit organization that has supported over 60,000 victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and human trafficking. Sojourner House offers a variety of services including support groups, shelter, housing, sexual health advocacy, and emotional support. Last year alone, Sojourner House assisted over 5,000 victims across the state.

Two years before I joined the Organization, in recognition of the need for affordable housing, Sojourner House began developing housing and now owns or leases over 200 units throughout Rhode Island. With this we are able to provide permanent supportive housing to victims. Sojourner House is the only organization in Rhode Island creating affordable housing for victims, and we believe this is the most effective way to help families transition to safety.

However, this can only be made possible with adequate financial resources.

Sojourner House receives over 80% of its funding from federal sources, most of which require matching funds. To ensure that Sojourner House can continue its vital work, these matching funds from the State of Rhode Island would be instrumental. This is a smart return on investment and would help Rhode Island meet its low-income housing goals.

**To close, we ask that you please support this \$500,000 allocation for Sojourner House.**

Submitted respectfully,

Gina Pellicano, CPA

Board Treasurer, Sojourner House