

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

May 14, 2026

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, H7324.

My name is Hilary Jones and I am the Senior Director of Community Programs at Sojourner House and a resident of Cranston. Our programs provide life-saving advocacy, education, and housing for clients during what is often the hardest experience of their lives.

Since 1976, Sojourner House has helped more than 60,000 survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. We provide emergency shelter, counseling, legal advocacy, transitional housing, and more. But in recent years, one need has risen above all others: safe, affordable, long-term housing.

In 2021, we began purchasing and rehabilitating properties to create permanent housing for survivors, many of whom have no safe alternatives after leaving an abusive partner. Today, Sojourner House owns or leases over 200 housing units across Rhode Island. We are the only victim service provider in the state actively developing affordable housing.

Last week, a couple came to our housing clinic looking for rental assistance, both having experienced violence in previous relationships. They had been homeless for over 1.5 years and had a 2 year old child. This support allowed them to get off the streets, providing safety and stability for their family. Other families looking for housing aren't as lucky, as we frequently have no option but to add them to a list of hundreds looking for shelter beds and housing that are already full. We are able to help many families, but if we lose funding, the list will grow even longer.

This appropriation is not just about buildings, it's about lives. Housing is the foundation of safety and healing. Yet over 80% of our funding comes from federal grants, which often require matching funds. Without a state partnership, we risk losing access to millions of federal dollars that directly support survivors in our communities.

A \$500,000 appropriation would allow us to continue meeting federal match requirements, preserve and expand our housing inventory, and ensure that victims have a safe place to turn, today and in the future.

I respectfully ask for your support of this critical investment in public safety, stability, and survivor well-being.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hilary Jones', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Hilary Jones
Senior Director of Community Programs
Sojourner House