

Re: Testimony in support of H7324

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the committee,

I have served on the Sojourner board for nine years. I have been so impressed by this organization that is professional, fiscally responsible, and effective - and it has not lost its soul.

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.

Sojourner House is a profound asset to our Rhode Island community especially to those from some of the most vulnerable backgrounds. In 2025, nearly two thirds (63%) of their clients were homeless at the time of intake and 93% were considered low or extremely low-income. Overall, last year, they assisted over 5,000 victims across the state in nearly every city.

Seven years ago, recognizing the need for affordable housing, Sojourner House began developing housing and now owns or leases over 200 units statewide, providing permanent supportive housing to victims. This is the most effective way to help families transition to safety and Sojourner House does it effectively by stretching funds to ensure those most people and families are supported. For example, with the proposed \$500,000 allocation, they could house 70 more adults and 127 more children with a savings of nearly 93% of what it would cost another state entity to do the same.

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,

Kersti Yllo

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