

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,

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 Melissa Babington and I write in strong support of Representative Casey's Joint Resolution to Support Sojourner House. This funding would be life-saving and life changing!

I am the Senior Director of Emergency Programs and have worked at Sojourner House for over seven years in the shelter and transitional housing programs. Because of Sojourner House I'm able to provide safe spaces for adults and their children that are fleeing domestic violence, sexual violence and or human trafficking.

We have three shelter programs and due to it always being full we created a crisis shelter program which is also always full. **The shelters are full because housing is not affordable for a one income household with children then adding in daycare and the basic needs to live and added trauma from everything they have experienced is debilitating.** Many people are struggling and cannot leave shelter. If they do get the opportunity to leave shelter, they can't sustain themselves long term and still need our advocacy, emotional and financial support.

I'm also writing as an adult that had experienced long term domestic violence as a child. I now understand why my mother never left her husband. She had four children, was uneducated, no job, no license and no support systems. There were no shelters big enough or willing to take on all of us.

Working with survivors is a deep passion of mine. I understand personally why people can't leave their situation. I do not want to be another reason.

Please support this \$500,000 allocation for Sojourner House.

Sincerely,

Melissa Babington
Sojourner House
Senior Director of Emergency Programs