

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

5/14/26

Re: Testimony in support of H7324

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the committee,

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

As a board member of Sojourner House and an insurance executive here in Rhode Island, I have had the privilege of working closely with this organization for the past year and a half. As a mother of two, I can appreciate firsthand the critical impact Sojourner House makes on families throughout our community. Despite our best efforts to provide safe shelter for residents in Rhode Island, an alarming 95% of individuals who reach out to our hotline are unable to be accommodated because we lack sufficient shelter space. By securing this funding, Sojourner House will be able to intervene earlier and help more victims of domestic and sexual abuse, reducing the burden on the Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) and saving the state considerable resources. I strongly urge you to support the bill and ensure these vital funds are allocated to Sojourner House so we can continue protecting and supporting those most in need.

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 2,000 victims across the state.

Seven years ago, recognizing the need for affordable housing, Sojourner House began developing housing and now owns or leases over 175 units statewide, providing permanent supportive housing to victims. This is the most effective way to help families transition to safety.

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.

Stephanie N. Clemente, CPCU (she/her)