

Chair Marvin L. Abney
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House

May 14, 2026



RE: Testimony in support of H7690—RI Works, Child Support Pass Through

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide **testimony in strong support of House Bill 7690**. We are writing to advocate for this critical policy as a tool not only to reduce child poverty but also to strengthen family safety and support survivors of domestic and family violence. H7690 would increase the child support pass through from \$50 to \$100 for the first child and \$200 for two or more children. This income is essential to families and belongs in their pockets to support children throughout our state.

For 50 years, Sojourner House, a non-profit based in Providence but now providing services across the state, has served thousands of victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and human trafficking. We offer wraparound services such as support groups, emergency shelter, transitional and permanent supportive housing, sexual health advocacy, and emotional support. We believe that everyone deserves a safe, healthy home, and proudly house all genders.

In 2024, 16.3% (32,549) of Rhode Island's children lived below the federal poverty line, the highest rate in New England and above the U.S. average^{i,ii,iii}. Economic stress is a well-established risk factor for domestic and family violence^{iv}. Families facing financial hardship experience higher levels of conflict, and survivors often struggle to leave abusive situations because they cannot afford housing, childcare, or basic necessities for their children. Research from Rhode Island Kids Count has shown that children are present in roughly one in four domestic violence incidents resulting in arrest which underscores how common children's exposure to violence is^v.

Research on anti-poverty tax credits like the Child Tax Credit and EITC show that such cash transfers to families improves child and family safety and reduces stress-related conflict that may lead to violence^{vi}. A state-level child tax credit ensures that Rhode Island families, particularly those most vulnerable, can provide a stable, safe, and nurturing environment for their children. By ensuring that families can access these funds quickly and easily, potentially through advance payments or simplified claim processes, the state maximizes the protective effect for those at highest risk.

We urge the Committee to support the proposed changes to the RI Works child support pass through which will help both reduce incidents of violence in homes with children and ensure that more families, including those recovering from domestic and family violence, have the resources they need to thrive.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

ⁱ Castro, A. (18 Sept, 2025). More Rhode Island children lived in poverty in 2024, new data shows. Rhode Island Current. <https://rhodeislandcurrent.com/2025/09/18/more-rhode-island-children-lived-in-poverty-in-2024-new-data-shows/>

ⁱⁱ Rhode Island Kids Count (11 Sept 2025). New census estimates show RI ranked 33rd in child poverty.

<https://rikidscount.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/9.25-Census-Data-media-alert-final.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Rhode Island Kids Count (2024). 2024 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT factbook. <https://rikidscount.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2024-Rhode-Island-KIDS-COUNT-Factbook.pdf>

^{iv} Lucero, J. L., Lim, S., & Santiago, A. M. (2016). Changes in economic hardship and intimate partner violence: A family stress framework. *Journal of Family Economic Issues*, 37, 395-406. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-016-9488-1>

^v Rhode Island Kids Count (2024). Rhode Island KIDS COUNT factbook: Safety. https://rikidscount.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/children-witnessing-domestic-violence_2024fb.pdf

^{vi} de Cuba, S. E., Coleman, S. M., Bovell-Ammon, A., Cutts, D., Sandel, M., Ochoa Jr., E., Reummele, C., Barnes, S. G., Bruce, C., Scully, K., Black, M. M., Frank, D. A., Le-Scherban, F. (2025). Expanded child tax credit, family health, and material hardships. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 8(6).

<https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.18335>