

February 11, 2026

House Committee on Judiciary
State of Rhode Island
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: In Support for House Bill 7206

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

I am writing in support of House Bill 7206. I am writing in support of House Bill 7206 because survivors of sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination should be able to come forward without fear of retaliation and weaponized defamation lawsuits. I am a social worker, professor, researcher, therapist, and survivor. Research continues to demonstrate not only the high prevalence of sexual violence but also the underreporting and formal seeking of help from survivors. We know that the culture of silence continues to surround sexual violence and survivors refrain from reporting or disclosure due to fear (e.g. retaliation), shame, blame, among many other reasons. It is crucial to create policy responses that break down these barriers and create opportunities for all survivors to feel safe, seen, heard throughout judicial processes and, in turn, cultivate safer communities and cities for all.

I urge you to pass a favorable report on House Bill 7206. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Molly C. Driessen, PhD, MSW, LICSW
Providence, RI