



**RE: Testimony in support of H8078, County Grand Juries**

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of House Bill 8078** would give grand juries an official way to issue findings to the public following an investigation, with judicial oversight to protect confidentiality and fairness.

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.

Transparency and accountability are essential to preventing abuse and supporting survivors. **Many survivors of sexual violence, particularly those harmed in institutional settings, never see their cases result in criminal charges due to barriers such as delayed disclosure, lack of evidence after many years, or statutes of limitation.<sup>i</sup> In these situations, public reporting about the findings of investigations can play an important role in acknowledging harm and informing the public about systemic failures that allowed abuse to occur. House Bill H8078 is a critical step toward increasing accountability and transparency in Rhode Island's justice system, particularly for victims of sexual and domestic violence.**

Research shows that institutional transparency and public reporting are strongly associated with improved policy reforms and victim-centered responses.<sup>ii</sup> Furthermore, public reports increase community awareness, strengthen vigilance, and support prevention efforts, which is particularly important given the often-hidden nature of abuse. Importantly, this transparency also helps rebuild victim trust in the justice system, demonstrating that their experiences are taken seriously and that oversight exists to prevent future harm. By aggregating findings across cases, grand jury reports can reveal systemic patterns of abuse and neglect, prompting policy and procedural reforms that protect survivors and strengthen Rhode Island's commitment to justice, safety, and accountability.

H8078 would allow grand juries to issue public reports about their investigations, subject to review by the Superior Court and procedural safeguards for those named in the report. This framework strikes an important balance between protecting due process and ensuring that the public can learn about patterns of misconduct uncovered during serious investigations.

**For survivors, transparency matters. Public reporting can validate survivors' experiences, help communities understand how abuse was enabled or concealed, and encourage institutions to adopt stronger safeguards for children and vulnerable people. We urge the Committee to support H80789 in support of survivors.**

---

<sup>i</sup> Spohn, C. (2020). Sexual assault case processing: The more things change, the more they stay the same. *International Journal for Crime, Justice, and Social Democracy*, 9(1), 86-94. <https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/informit.125232218452814>

---

<sup>ii</sup> Ridolfi-Starr, Z. (31 May 2016). Transformation requires transparency: Critical policy reforms to advance campus sexual violence response. *The Yale Law Journal*, 125. <https://yalelawjournal.org/feature/transformation-requires-transparency>