



RE: Testimony in support of H8080, Domestic Violence Prevention Act

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of House Bill 8080** which seeks to ensure repeat offenders of domestic violence are held accountable to the

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.

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive control and escalating harm that can lead to severe physical injury or death if left unchecked. Repeat offenses often reflect ongoing danger to victims and their families. **Research shows that repeated incidents of domestic violence are strongly associated with escalation in severity, increased risk of serious injury, and a higher likelihood of homicide.**^{i,ii} For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identifies **prior domestic violence as one of the most significant risk factors for intimate partner homicide, underscoring that patterns of violence tend to grow more dangerous over time if not interrupted early and effectively.**ⁱⁱⁱ

House Bill 8080 would strengthen the Domestic Violence Prevention Act by ensuring that a defendant's third and subsequent domestic violence offense, including both prior misdemeanors and felonies, is prosecuted as a felony, rather than allowing repeat harm to go insufficiently punished. Elevating repeat domestic violence offenses to felony status acknowledges the escalating risk and severity of ongoing abuse, provides more robust tools for prosecutors and courts to respond effectively, and supports survivor safety by recognizing that repeat offending is a serious threat to lives and wellbeing.

Research also demonstrates that stricter legal consequences for repeat offenders, when paired with comprehensive victim support, can contribute to reduced recidivism and improved outcomes for survivors, especially when combined with risk assessment protocols and coordinated community responses. Stronger penalties send a clear message that repeated violations of protective orders and violent conduct will not be tolerated.

Sojourner House strongly supports H8080 and urges the Committee to pass this important bill to protect survivors and reduce patterns of domestic violence in Rhode Island.

ⁱ Campbell, J. C. (2004). "Danger Assessment" and risk factors for intimate partner homicide. *National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC*.

ⁱⁱ Zeoli, A. M., et al. (2013). Risk factors for intimate partner homicide in the context of prior domestic violence. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 14*(4), 225–238.

ⁱⁱⁱ United State Centers for Disease Control (11 February, 2026). About intimate partner violence. <https://www.cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence/about/>