

Chair Carol H. McEntee  
House Judiciary Committee  
Rhode Island State House

March 18, 2026



## **RE: Testimony in support of H7130— Residential and Landlord Tenant Act**

Dear Chair Solomon and Members of the Committee:

Our testimony today is submitted to **express support for H7130**. The proposed bill would allow tenants to pay increased security deposit charges (based on increases in rent) in payments over 12 months rather than immediately.

For 50 years, Sojourner House, a non-profit based in Providence but now providing services across the state, has served over 60,000 victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and human trafficking.

This reform is imperative for low-income households and financially vulnerable individuals. Families living paycheck to paycheck are not likely to be able to afford sudden or sometimes even anticipated bills, especially those of substantial amounts. For many, allowing rent increases to be paid over 12 months in more manageable payments can be the difference between remaining stably housed and homeless. Strengthening protections to offset the increasingly insurmountable cost of housing is essential to keeping Rhode Islanders stably housed.

This is a practical, balanced policy that recognizes the financial realities facing Rhode Island renters while still respecting the needs of property owners. Specifically, **this policy also benefits landlords by reducing tenant turnover, minimizing vacancies, and supporting more reliable, sustained rental payments. Housing stability is a shared interest, and H7130 helps align the needs of both tenants and property owners.**

Further, H7130 is fundamental to our organization, Sojourner House, in helping to maintain safety and stability for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, and human trafficking. For many survivors, securing and maintaining housing is one of the most critical steps toward safety and long-term stability.<sup>i,ii,iii</sup> However, survivors disproportionately face economic hardship due to financial abuse, disrupted employment, and limited access to financial resources. Many have damaged credit, little to no savings, and urgent, competing financial demands as they attempt to rebuild their lives.<sup>iv,v</sup>

**Requiring survivors to pay increased security deposits in a lump sum can present an insurmountable obstacle which may force them to choose between unsafe living situations and homelessness. Allowing these payments to be made over time provides a crucial layer of flexibility that can help survivors remain housed, maintain independence, and avoid returning to abusive environments.** For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to advance H7850. Thank you for your consideration and support for Rhode Island survivors of sexual and domestic violence, and human trafficking.

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<sup>i</sup> National Low Income Housing Coalition (2020, June 10). Domestic violence. <https://nlihc.org/resource/domestic-violence>

<sup>ii</sup> Pavao, J., Alvarez, J., Baumrind, N., Induni, M., & Kimerling, R. (2007). Intimate partner violence and housing instability. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 32(2), 143-146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2006.10.008>

<sup>iii</sup> Zapata, A. Wood, L. G., Galvin, A. M., Chan, W., Thomas, T. A., Tsai, J., Way, H. K., Mueller, E. J., & Hernandez, D. C. (2025). Domains of housing instability and intimate partner violence risk among U.S. tenants. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 22, 1212. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph22081212>

<sup>iv</sup> Fanning, P. (n.d.). Recognizing financial abuse: A growing weapon in intimate partner violence. University of Maryland School of Social Work. <https://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/fall-2024-connections/alumni-and-faculty-making-an-impact-in-ipv/recognizing-financial-abuse-a-growing->

