

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

March 18, 2026



RE: Testimony in support of H7765—Residential and Landlord Tenant Act

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the Committee:

Our testimony today is submitted to express **strong support for H7765**. This bill is an important step toward ensuring that safe, affordable, and equitable housing is protected for all Rhode Islanders by increasing the notice for rental terminations among month-to-month renters from 30 days to 60 days (and 120 days for renters over 65 years old).

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.

Nearly 1 in 2 Rhode Island women and 2 in 5 Rhode Island men experience domestic violence in their lifetimes and research shows that rates of domestic violence homicides are rising.^{i,ii,iii} Further, **housing remains the number one barrier to finding safety outside of a violent relationship** and the lack of available housing contributing to homelessness can lead to further sexual victimization and abuse.^{iv,v,vi}

Complicating this, affordable housing in Rhode Island remains critically low^{vii}. Of our 39 municipalities, only 8 have met the 10% goal of affordable housing stock.^{viii} Additionally, **there are only about 30 available units for every 100 extremely low-income renters meaning 70% of extremely low-income Rhode Islanders struggle to secure stable, appropriate, and affordable housing.**^{vii,ix} As a result, many may choose to rent on a month-to-month basis in hopes of securing something more affordable in the near future rather than committing to something unaffordable for the long-term.

This context is particularly important for survivors of domestic violence who disproportionately come from low-income backgrounds and often also face damaged credit, limited savings, and urgent financial needs due to economic abuse while trying to secure safety.^{x,xi} Increasing the amount of notice given to tenants renting on a monthly basis can allow for more time to secure another housing option in the midst of a market that is unfriendly to our most vulnerable neighbors. **Further, as housing remains the number one barrier to finding safety outside of a violent relationship, it can also be the catalyst that pushes someone back into a violent relationship with limited housing options.**

Providing more time to transition from one housing option to another is a necessary step to ensuring the most vulnerably housed Rhode Islanders have time to secure the next place they will live in the tight rental market with few affordable housing options available. **For survivors of domestic violence, this extra time could be the difference between staying independently housed and returning to an abuser or becoming homeless.** We hope you will join us in advocating for H7765 and ensuring housing stability for the most vulnerable Rhode Islanders.

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- ⁱ Berker, M. (2025, Sept 12). Nearly 5.4M Americans reported domestic violence in 5 years, homicides doubled since 2019. Anadolu Ajansi. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/nearly-54m-americans-reported-domestic-violence-in-5-years-homicides-doubled-since-2019/3766229#>
- ⁱⁱ Housing Works Rhode Island (2025, July). 2025 Housing Fact Book. https://stdidhousingworksriprod.blob.core.windows.net/housingworksri/documents/Housing-Fact-Books/HWRI_HFB25.pdf
- ⁱⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control (December, 2023). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 State Report. <https://www.cdc.gov/nisvs/documentation/NISVS-2016-2017-State-Report-508.pdf>
- ^{iv} National Low Income Housing Coalition (2020, June 10). Domestic violence. <https://nlihc.org/resource/domestic-violence>
- ^v 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>
- ^{vi} 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>
- ^{vii} National Low-Income Housing Association (NLHI) (n.d.). The gap: A shortage of affordable homes. <https://nlihc.org/gap>
- ^{viii} Housing Works Rhode Island (2025, July). 2025 Housing Fact Book. https://stdidhousingworksriprod.blob.core.windows.net/housingworksri/documents/Housing-Fact-Books/HWRI_HFB25.pdf
- ^{ix} Community Housing Network (2023, October 30). Domestic violence survivors face a silent crisis due to lack of affordable housing. [https://communityhousingnetwork.org/domestic-violence-survivors-face-a-silent-crisis-due-to-lack-of-affordable-housing/#:~:text=For%20every%20100%20extremely%20low%2Dincome%20renter%20households%2C,the%20National%20Low%20Income%20Housing%20Coalition%20\(NLIHC\)](https://communityhousingnetwork.org/domestic-violence-survivors-face-a-silent-crisis-due-to-lack-of-affordable-housing/#:~:text=For%20every%20100%20extremely%20low%2Dincome%20renter%20households%2C,the%20National%20Low%20Income%20Housing%20Coalition%20(NLIHC))
- ^x 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-weapon-in-intimate-partner-violence-/#:~:text=Two%20frequently%20cited%20studies%20of,78%20percent%20reported%20employment%20sabotage>
- ^{xi} National Network to End Domestic Violence (n.d.). About financial abuse. <https://nnedv.org/content/about-financial-abuse/#:~:text=Research%20indicates%20that%20financial%20abuse,returning%20to%20an%20abusive%20partner>