

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

March 18, 2026



RE: Testimony in support of H8109—Just Cause Evictions

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the Committee:

Our testimony today is submitted to **express strong support for H78109**. his bill is a critical step toward ensuring protections for Rhode Islanders who are most vulnerably housed by requiring landlords to justify evictions with documented and legally recognized reasons.

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.

For victims of domestic violence, evictions can often be part of a larger pattern of abuse. Domestic violence in the home can result in property damage or be deliberately used as a method of control, limiting a survivor's ability to safely leave an abusive relationship.^{i,ii} Abusers may take actions such as forcing all bills, including rent, to be solely in the survivor's name, damaging property, or diverting funds meant for rent in order to harm the survivor's credit. These tactics are unfortunately common among the people served daily by our organization.

By clarifying and strengthening the circumstances under which evictions can be filed, H8109 provides survivors of domestic violence with the ability to present evidence to challenge an eviction, rather than being removed from their homes outright. This bill thus offers an important layer of legal protection and housing stability for survivors seeking safety.

Importantly, survivors should never face eviction for calling the police or seeking help during a domestic violence incident. Too often, landlords view a police report or a 911 call as a "problem" and attempt to evict the tenant, even though the survivor was acting to protect themselves. For example, research shows that landlords are significantly less likely to rent to people calling from a domestic violence shelter to inquire about a rental compared to other callers who didn't provide any information demonstrating the stigma associated with these experiences.ⁱⁱⁱ H8109 ensures that evictions can only occur for legally recognized, documented reasons, preventing abusers or landlords from using eviction as a tool of control or retaliation. This strengthens housing stability and allows survivors to remain safely in their homes while seeking safety and support.

We strongly support H8109 because it directly protects Rhode Islanders who are most at risk of losing safe housing, including survivors of domestic violence. Eviction is often used as a tool of control in abusive relationships, leaving survivors with limited options to escape harm. By requiring landlords to provide documented and legally recognized reasons for eviction, this bill ensures that survivors are not forced from their homes arbitrarily and have the opportunity to defend their right to safe, stable housing.

We respectfully urge the committee to support H8109.

ⁱ 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>

ⁱⁱ 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>

ⁱⁱⁱ Barata, P. C., & Stewart, D. E. (2006). *Housing discrimination against victims of domestic violence*. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.