

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

April 9, 2026



RE: Testimony in support of House Bill 8055, Assaults

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support of H8055**, a bill that would raise the level of accountability in cases of assault with intent to murder on par with the seriousness of the offense by increasing minimum sentences from no less than 1 year to no less than 10 years without suspension, deferment, or probation possibilities.

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.

The individuals we serve often experience escalating patterns of violence. What may begin as coercion, threats, or physical abuse can and far too often does progress to life-threatening harm. Assault with intent to commit murder represents one of the most severe manifestations of this continuum of violence. Further, these escalating threats rise exponentially during times when survivors attempt to flee.^{i,ii} Abusers often escalate threats, stalking, or physical attacks to regain control during separation.^{iii,iv,v} **If a situation has already escalated to this level of lethality, the evidence is clear—action and accountability are essential to survivor safety.**

H8055 appropriately recognizes the gravity of this offense by establishing meaningful, consistent consequences. By setting a mandatory minimum sentence and eliminating the possibility of probation or suspended sentences, this legislation ensures that individuals who commit the most serious acts of intentional violence are held fully accountable.

For survivors, accountability is not abstract but is directly tied to safety. Survivors frequently make decisions about whether to report abuse, seek restraining orders, or participate in prosecution based on their assessment of risk. When consequences are uncertain or perceived as insufficient, survivors may reasonably fear retaliation or further harm. House Bill 8055 helps address that concern. **Clear and serious penalties can reinforce survivor confidence in the justice system, reduce the likelihood of repeat or escalating violence and send a strong message that extreme acts of violence will be treated with the severity they warrant.**

We support House Bill 8055 and respectfully urge the Committee to move it forward to protect survivors.

ⁱ Mayock, P. & Neary, F. (2025). "Where am I going to go tonight? Where am I literally going to go?": Exploring the dynamics of domestic violence and family homelessness. *Journal of Family Violence*, 40, 987-1002. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-023-00667-8>

ⁱⁱ Campbell, J. C., Webster, D., Koziol-McLain, J., Block, C., Campbell, D., Curry, M. A., Gary, F., Glass, N., McFarlane, J., Sachs, C., Sharps, P., Ulrich, Y., Wilt, S. A., Manganello, J., Schollenberger, J., Frye, V., & Loughton, K. (2003). Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: Results from a multisite case control study. In *Domestic Violence* (pp. 135-143).

ⁱⁱⁱ Mayock, P. & Neary, F. (2025). "Where am I going to go tonight? Where am I literally going to go?": Exploring the dynamics of domestic violence and family homelessness. *Journal of Family Violence*, 40, 987-1002. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-023-00667-8>

^{iv} Hardesty, J. L., Raffaelli, M., Khaw, L., Mitchell, E. T., Haselschwerdt, M. L., & Crossman, K., A. (2012). An integrative theoretical model of intimate partner violence, coparenting after separation, and maternal and child well-being. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 4, 318-331. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1756-2589.2012.00139.x>

^v Spearman, K. J., Hardesty, J. L., & Campbell, J. (2022). Post-separation abuse: A concept analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 79, 1225-1246. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.15310>