



**RE: Testimony in support of House Bill 7968, Temporary Disability Insurance**

Dear Chair Corvese and Members of the Committee:

We thank the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of H7968** which seeks to strengthen the state's Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI) and Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) by providing more paid time, expanding the definition of who we can care for, and including disproportionately vulnerable, self-employed Rhode Islanders.

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 often creates situations where survivors must suddenly leave their homes, relocate, seek medical care, attend court proceedings, or secure safe housing for themselves and their children. These transitions are not only traumatic—they are also financially destabilizing. Survivors frequently face the impossible choice between protecting their safety and maintaining their income.

Policies that strengthen paid leave systems are therefore an important part of the safety net. First, the bill's expansion of caregiving eligibility, including recognition of additional family relationships, reflects the reality of how families respond to domestic violence. When abuse occurs, caregiving responsibilities often shift quickly. Grandparents, siblings, and other relatives frequently step in to care for children or to support survivors recovering from physical or emotional harm.<sup>i</sup> Ensuring that caregivers can access paid leave helps stabilize these families during crisis.

Second, the bill's gradual increase in the number of weeks available for caregiver leave is significant. Survivors navigating medical recovery, legal processes, and housing transitions often require more time than current leave structures allow. Additional weeks of paid leave can make the difference between maintaining employment and falling into long-term economic instability.

Third, allowing self-employed workers to opt into coverage is an important step toward equity. Many survivors work in freelance, gig, or independent roles where traditional employer benefits are unavailable.<sup>ii</sup> Extending access to these workers ensures that the safety net reaches people whose employment circumstances already make them economically vulnerable.

**Domestic violence is not only a personal crisis—it is also a public health and economic issue. Policies that support financial stability during times of crisis are critical components of prevention and recovery. For these reasons, strengthening Rhode Island's paid leave programs through H7968 can provide meaningful support to survivors and the family members who care for them.**

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<sup>i</sup> Hayslip, B. & Kaminski, P. L. (2005). Grandparents raising their grandchildren: A review of the literature and suggestions for practice. *The Gerontologist*, 45(2), 262-269. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/45.2.262>

<sup>ii</sup> Pires, F. (11 Feb 2026). Not all gigs are equal: Informal self-employment linked to lower pay, poorer health and instability. <https://news.umich.edu/not-all-gigs-are-equal-informal-self-employment-linked-to-lower-pay-poorer-health-and-instability/>