



**RE: Testimony in support Senate Bill 2238—Personal Income Tax**

Dear Chair DiPalma and Members of the Committee:

We respectfully submit this testimony in **strong support of Senate Bill 2238 and urge you to consider this legislation not only as a revenue proposal, but as an opportunity to make a consistent investment in the safety and stability of Rhode Island families.**

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. **Despite the clear and growing need, Rhode Island continues to lack consistent, stable state-level investment in domestic violence (DV) prevention and survivor services.** Year after year, nonprofit organizations must compete for limited funds, unsure whether critical life-saving programs will be sustained.

**The consequences of domestic violence are not only personal and traumatic but they are profoundly economic.** An estimated 37% of the total cost of domestic violence is borne directly by government systems<sup>ii</sup>. The average lifetime cost per female victim is \$103,767, and \$23,414 per male victim<sup>i</sup>. These costs show up in Medicaid and emergency healthcare spending, law enforcement response, court proceedings, incarceration, child welfare involvement, housing instability, and lost workforce participation<sup>ii</sup>.

Right now, Rhode Island relies heavily on unpredictable federal funds and limited competitive grant pools to keep shelters open, crisis lines staffed, and families housed. That is not a sustainable foundation for a core public safety function. If we are serious about reducing homelessness, trauma, and system costs tied to domestic violence, **we must create a reliable state funding stream** that allows providers to plan, retain skilled staff, and expand services where the need is greatest.

The Governor's millionaire tax proposal provides the state with the capacity to do exactly that. By asking the wealthiest Rhode Islanders to contribute more through a new top tax bracket, Rhode Island can generate ongoing revenue that can be strategically directed toward domestic violence and survivor services. **We urge you to support this proposal and consider dedicating a portion of the new revenue generated to a stable, recurring line item for DV/SA services.**

The General Assembly has an opportunity to align our tax policy with our values: that every person deserves to live free from violence, and no survivor should be turned away because the funding ran out. This is a great chance to do just that.

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<sup>i</sup> Peterson, C., Kearns, M. C., McIntosh, W. L., Estefan, L. F., Nicolaidis, C., McCollister, K. E., Gordon, A., & Florence, C. (2018). Lifetime economic burden of intimate partner violence among U.S. adults. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 55(4), 433-444. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2018.04.049>