

Chair Louis DiPalma
Senate Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House

May 5, 2026



Re: Testimony in support of S2848

Dear Chairman DiPalma and members of the committee,

I write in strong support of Senator Murray's Joint Resolution to Support Sojourner House.

For 50 years, Sojourner House, a Providence-based non-profit now serving all of Rhode Island, has supported over 60,000 victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and human trafficking. They offer services like support groups, shelter, housing, sexual health advocacy, and emotional support.

I have been working at Sojourner House for the past 10 years working specifically with homeless and housing unstable survivors. I currently serve as the Senior Director of Housing, overseeing projects that span from housing access through short, medium and permanent housing solutions. Daily I work with my team to serve survivors sleeping on streets, young adult survivors with no support, survivors who have been separated from children, survivors who have significant health barriers after experiencing abuse, and unfortunately- survivors who have not yet gotten the chance to leave. Most times, we have around 100 households waiting for a housing opportunity so they can rebuild their lives with safety and support.

Sojourner House is a profound asset to our Rhode Island community especially to those from some of the most vulnerable backgrounds. In 2025, nearly two thirds (63%) of their clients were homeless at the time of intake and 93% were considered low or extremely low-income. Overall, last year, they assisted over 5,000 victims across the state in nearly every city.

Seven years ago, recognizing the need for affordable housing, Sojourner House began developing housing and now owns or leases over 200 units statewide, providing permanent supportive housing to victims. This is the most effective way to help families transition to safety and Sojourner House does it effectively by stretching funds to ensure that most people and families are supported. For example, with the proposed \$500,000 allocation, they could house 70 more adults and 127 more children with a savings of nearly 93% of what it would cost another state entity to do the same.

Sojourner House is the **only organization in Rhode Island creating affordable housing for victims**. They receive over 80% of their funding from federal sources, most of which require matching funds. It's time for Rhode Island to provide matching funds to ensure Sojourner House can continue its vital work.

This is a smart return on investment and is helping Rhode Island meet its low-income housing goals. Please support this \$500,000 allocation for Sojourner House.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "AB" followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Amanda Berno
30 Slocum Street, East Providence, RI 02914