

Chairman Louis DiPalma
Senate Finance Committee
RI State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony in support of S2848

Dear Chairman DiPalma and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Ijeoma Oguamanam and I am writing to express my support for Senator Murray's joint resolution in support of Sojourner House.

In 2019, after fleeing from an abusive marriage, my children and I found shelter at Sojourner House. It was an incredibly difficult time in my life, but I look back fondly on the staff who were there to assist me, especially my advocates, Melissa and Mills. While in shelter, they helped me get set up with counseling services and apply for benefits through the Department of Human Services.

After my time in shelter, I was referred to Sojourner House's Rapid Rehousing Program, where my kids and I were able to get a beautiful apartment in Providence and have our rent partially paid for by the agency. After a while though, because of lack of financial support from my ex-husband, we were struggling financially. Thankfully, Sojourner House found room for us in their Permanent Supportive Housing Program, a program that offers longer term support and more hands on case management services.

I've had to appear in court several times for custody modifications with my ex-husband and someone from Sojourner House's legal team was even able to stand with me in court.

Thanks to the support they provided me, I was able to successfully complete a teacher's assistant program and am now employed at a school as an assistant teacher. Down the line I dream of working with and helping other survivors of domestic and interpersonal violence.

The work this organization does is truly life-changing. Rhode Islanders rely on them every day to keep them safe, keep them fed, and to hold their hands through their darkest days. I hope that by hearing my story, you better understand the importance of their work and the work of organizations like them. We cannot let them go unfunded.

Thank you,
Ijeoma Oguamanam