



RE: Testimony in support of Senate Bill 2290—Relating to Criminal Procedure—Bail and Recognizance

Dear Chair LaMountain and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of Senate Bill S2290**, which seeks to address inequities in the cash bail system while maintaining important protections for victims of domestic violence.

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.

S2290 maintains critical protections in domestic-violence cases. The legislation preserves the court's full authority to impose bail, detention, and protective conditions when a domestic-violence charge or safety risk is present. Judges will continue to have the tools necessary to protect victims, including no-contact orders, monitoring, and other enforceable conditions.

Research shows that the period when a survivor attempts to leave an abusive partner is the most dangerous, with a significantly increased risk of violence or homicide by the abuser.^{i,ii} (Campbell et al., 2003; National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2020). Abusers often escalate threats, stalking, or physical attacks to regain control during separation.^{iii,iv,v} In these situations, it is crucial that courts retain the authority to set financial bail or detain the alleged abuser, ensuring they are not free to further threaten or harm the survivor while awaiting trial. By maintaining this discretion, S2290 balances bail reform for low-risk misdemeanors with targeted protections that keep survivors safe during the high-risk period of separation.

By preserving these critical protections, S2290 ensures that survivors of domestic violence can pursue safety and stability without fear. Maintaining judicial discretion allows courts to respond to high-risk situations with bail, detention, and enforceable conditions, preventing abusers from exploiting the dangerous period of separation. In balancing broader bail reform with targeted safety measures, S2290 affirms that protecting survivors is paramount, giving them the security and support they need to rebuild their lives while recognizing the inequity rooted in standard monetary bail practices that disproportionately harm low-income communities. Pretrial detention can destabilize families already facing crisis through loss of employment, housing instability, and disruption to childcare and family support systems.

Effective protection for survivors comes from targeted safety measures, such as enforceable protective orders, supervision, and clear court oversight rather than reliance on financial bonds. S2290 moves Rhode Island toward a system that prioritizes safety and accountability, ensuring that the ability to pay does not determine a survivor's protection, while still allowing courts to use bonds in high-risk domestic-violence cases. **For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to support Senate Bill S2290. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to the safety and well-being of Rhode Island families.**

ⁱ 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).

ⁱⁱ Davies, L., Ford-Gilboe, M., & Hammerton, J. (2009). Gender inequality and patterns of abuse post leaving. *Journal of Family Violence*, *24*, 27-39. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-008-9204-5>

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>