



April 2, 2025

Chair Teresa Tanzi  
House Finance Committee  
Human Services Subcommittee  
RI State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, Ri 02903

Re: Testimony regarding the Governor's FY2026 Budget, relating to the DHS Budget

Dear Chair Tanzi and members of the committee,

Our testimony today concerns the Governor's FY2026 proposed DHS Budget, specifically around prevention and domestic violence services. We are proud to contract with the state to provide family violence prevention and services and we encourage the General Assembly to consider allocating additional funds to this important work. **We also request that the FY26 final budget include a \$500,000 allocation to help Sojourner House meet our federal housing grant match requirements, as outlined in Representative Casey's Resolution, H5323.**

For 48 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. In 2024, Sojourner House helped nearly 2,000 victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking from 33 different RI cities and towns. Almost 70% of our clients are people of color; 85% of our clients have children under 18 with them; and over 95% of our clients are low or extremely low income.

Five years ago, recognizing the shortage of affordable housing in our community, Sojourner House made the decision to begin housing development work of our own. Since then, we've made five real estate transactions and currently own or lease over 175 units across 33 cities and towns. This allows us to provide permanent supportive housing to victims, as we know this is the most effective way to help victims and their families transition out of very dangerous situations into safety.

As the only victim service organization in Rhode Island developing affording housing, our

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comprehensive permanent supportive housing program and a rapid rehousing program provide critical, life-saving support to families who have experienced abuse. These programs help families rebuild their lives.

Sojourner House receives more than 80% of its funding from federal sources, and most of those sources require that the organization finds a way to match their contribution. While we have scraped together matching dollars so far, we are running out of places to find matching funds.

Our work helps the state meet its affordable housing goals and so we are seeking a partnership with the State to secure matching funds for these federal grants, ensuring that we can continue to provide supportive housing and life-saving care to victims in Rhode Island. **This is a smart return on investment. Please include this \$500,000 allocation for Sojourner House in the final FY26 budget.**

Thank you for your time and review of this testimony. Please contact me at [Vvolz@Sojournerri.org](mailto:Vvolz@Sojournerri.org) if you have any questions about our work or this testimony.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Volz  
President & CEO

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