



April 23, 2024

Chairman Craven
House Judiciary Committee
RI State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony in support of H7744

Dear Chairman Craven and members of the Committee,

We write in support of Representative Fogarty's Domestic Violence Prevention Act, H7744, which will increase the penalty for a third domestic violence violation to a felony.

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 recent years we have become an affordable housing developer as well because we recognize that securing permanent supportive housing is the most effective way for victims and survivors to transition out of very dangerous situations and into safety.

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.

Sadly, the need for our services is growing. Over the past 9 months, we've helped 500 people at our 5 different housing clinics. Our 12 shelter rooms are nearly always full. Over the last 90 days, we had space on 10 nights for one person (or a parent and child) and on 5 nights for two different adults in different locations.

We thank Representative Fogarty for introducing this legislation that will make clear that Rhode island is serious about protecting domestic violence victims and hopefully deter repeat offenders. We urge you to pass this bill.

386 Smith Street | Providence, RI 02908

Drop-in Center: 401.861.6191 | Fax: 401.861.6157 | Housing Office: 401.808.6889

Helplines: 401.765.3232 | 401.658.4334 | Web: www.sojournerri.org



Thank you for your time and review of this testimony. Please contact me at vvolz@sojournerri.org if you have any questions about our work or this testimony.

Sincerely,



Vanessa Volz
Executive Director

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