



February 2, 2021

Chair Stephen Casey
House Committee on Health and Human Services
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: H5370 on Confidential Healthcare Communications

Dear Chair Casey:

The Rhode Island Chapter of the National Organization for Women (RI NOW) supports H5370, the Confidentiality of Health Care Communications and Information Act, which allows Rhode Islanders insured on others' plans to have confidential health care information about themselves sent only to themselves.

When it comes to healthcare decisions confidentiality and privacy are very important. This is especially true for abused partners (who disproportionately are women), LGBTQ youth, and young women who may be sexually active. By law these people can all consent independently to their own healthcare choices, but because of the structure of health insurance the person who pays/provides (and hence has more power) can act with retribution in a variety of ways.

This important act means health information, including test results, be sent to an alternative email or physical mailing address. Moreover, those requests can be filled out online or in hard copy to make it easier for individuals to protect their confidential healthcare decisions and information. This legislation also allows insurers to mask sensitive services with broad descriptions like "office visit" or "medical care," so it is not so specific as to indicate a test or treatment.

Again, H5370 helps protect the healthcare choices of all Rhode Islanders, but especially women, young people, and those who may sadly be discriminated against or abused within their own families. RI NOW urges passage.

Thank you for your consideration,

Hilary Levey Friedman, PhD
RI Chapter, National Organization for Women

Rhode Island National Organization for Women (RI NOW) is a membership-based advocacy organization with hundreds of members and supporters throughout the state of Rhode Island. We believe that anyone who identifies as a woman deserves equality and equity in political, social, and economic arenas.