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TTY: 711
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March 1, 2021

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey
Chairman
House Committee on Health and Human Services
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: H 5431 – An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Restroom Access

Dear Chairman Casey:

I am writing in support of H 5431, legislation which would require retail establishments, with three or more employees on the premises, without immediately accessible public restroom facilities to allow customers who suffer from eligible medical conditions to use employee restrooms upon presentation of documentation issued by a licensed physician.

At least 16 states have passed versions of the proposed Rhode Island legislation, including Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin, and Washington. The legislation was first enacted in Illinois in 2005 after a 14-year-old girl who had a flare up of her Crohn's Disease while shopping at a large retail store was denied use of the employee-only restroom and had an accident in public.

Eligible conditions in H 5431 include Crohn's Disease, ulcerative colitis, other inflammatory bowel syndrome(s), pregnancy, cancer, or any other medical condition that requires immediate access to the restroom facility. Anyone who has a medical condition should not have difficulty gaining access to a restroom when there is an urgent need to use one. The enactment of H 7468 would ensure that a person with such a medical condition does not have to provide lengthy and personal explanations to employees to request access to the restroom.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Alexander-Scott".

for

Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH
Director
Rhode Island Department of Health

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on HHS
The Honorable Mia A. Ackerman
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House

