



Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

**Testimony on 26-H 7529,
AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -
RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF TEACHERS GENERALLY
House Committee on Education
Hannah Stern - Director, Public Policy and Government Relations
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
March 17, 2026**

Dear Chair McNamara and honorable members of the House Committee on Education:

In my capacity as the Director, Public Policy and Government Relations at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (PPSNE), I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony **on H 7529. While we take no position on this legislation substantively, we offer commentary on the ways that two provisions within this bill could impact the bodily autonomy and reproductive health of students.** PPSNE provided sexual and reproductive health care to nearly 10,000 Rhode Island patients last year and believes all people should have access to quality, affordable, and compassionate health care as a basic human right — regardless of who you are, where you live, your income, if you have health insurance or your immigration status.

In understanding the importance of protecting teachers while they are at work, we note that the language in two provisions of this legislation could be interpreted broadly enough that the rights extended to teachers may have the collateral impact of infringing on the rights of students.

- Section 9 on page 2, lines 13-15 allows for a teacher to “be free to share information regarding a student’s educational experience, health, or safety with the student’s parent or legal guardian” unless otherwise prohibited. We are concerned that this section could allow teachers to share entirely private – but age and developmentally appropriate – information about a student without that student’s consent. A student, for example, who identifies as LGBTQ+ at school, or who has asked teachers to use different pronouns with them in class, but who has not shared this

same information with their parents should not be put at risk of having information that is ultimately irrelevant to their academic work exposed by teachers. The personal development of bodily autonomy and self-determination relies on the ability for a person to safely explore who they are and how they express themselves, especially without the fear that their personal life may be revealed by adults they otherwise trusted.

- Section 16 in lines 28-31 provides that “academic freedom” be granted to employees, with no “special limitations” placed on “study, investigation, presenting and interpreting facts and ideas concerning people, human society, the physical and biological world, and other branches of learning subject to accepted standards of professional responsibility.” With no clarification as to what the accepted standards of professional responsibility are, this provision could be interpreted to permit an inappropriate or inaccurate presentation – or omission – of educational ideas that the teacher does not agree with. Imagine, for example, a teacher who believes in abstinence-only health education and thus only emphasizes this concept due to their interpretation of communicating “ideas concerning people”. This could also lead to teachers refusing to provide instruction on important academic subjects, including, for example, civil rights history or seminal United States Supreme Court cases such as *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which granted same-sex couples the fundamental right to marry. The risks to academic freedom and self-determination that this provision could pose include innumerable situations which would directly impact the current and future reproductive health of students.

Though we take no position on the content of this bill overall, we appreciate the opportunity to present some examples of the subjectiveness of the language within this legislation that could impact the critical reproductive rights and rights to self-determination of students.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.



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