

Chris O'Brien

From: Gaudreau, Erin <Erin.Gaudreau@ppsne.org>
Sent: Wednesday, April 30, 2025 10:58 AM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: Testimony in Support of H 5771

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance:

My name is Erin Gaudreau. I was born and raised in Warren and now serve as General Counsel at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of House Bill 5771, introduced by Representative Alzate.

H 5771 is a critical step toward expanding access to fertility care for Rhode Islanders who are enrolled in Medicaid and have been historically excluded from coverage. This bill will bring fertility care insurance in line with the current standard of medical care. That standard rightly includes LGBTQ+ individuals, single people, and others who have often been left out of the conversation. Everyone deserves the chance to build a family, regardless of income, identity, or insurance status. Fertility care is not a luxury; it is essential health care.

This issue is deeply personal to me. From the time I was a child, I dreamed of becoming a mother. At my kindergarten career day, I told my class I wanted to be “mommy president,” a mom and President of the United States. At the time, I thought the presidency would be the harder goal. But when my husband and I began trying to grow our family, we encountered the heartbreak of infertility. After six months without success, I was fortunate to have an OB-GYN who listened to my concerns and referred us to a specialist. We became part of the 1 in 6 couples worldwide who experience infertility.

Our journey included six intrauterine inseminations, a miscarriage, and eventually, in vitro fertilization (IVF). It was physically and emotionally exhausting. But I was incredibly fortunate that it was not financially devastating. Because I now live in Massachusetts, where there are strong mandates for fertility coverage, and because I had access to robust private insurance, the out-of-pocket cost for my IVF cycle was just \$227.82. This coverage gave me the freedom to make medical decisions based on what was best for my health and my family, not on what we could afford. And it made it possible for me to welcome my son last summer with hope that we can continue to grow our family in the future.

Becoming a parent has been one of the most meaningful and transformative experiences of my life. That opportunity should not be reserved for those who can conceive without assistance or for those who can afford the high cost of fertility care out of pocket. LGBTQIA+ individuals, single parents by choice, and all people facing infertility deserve the same opportunity. When we deny coverage, we deny dignity and possibility to people from all backgrounds.

Supporting H 5771 is not just a matter of reproductive freedom; it is a matter of economic and health equity. All people, regardless of income or identity, have the right to decide if, when, and how to become a parent. As reproductive rights face increasing threats across the country, Rhode Island has a chance to lead by example. This bill affirms the fundamental right to build a family and ensures our laws reflect modern medical standards. They must no longer rely on outdated exclusions.