

March 24, 2026

The Honorable Teresa Tanzi, Chair
House Finance Subcommittee on Human Services
Rhode Island State House, Room 35
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: H 7127, Article 1 Section 1 by Representative Marvin Abney MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE STATE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2027

Dear Chair Tanzi and Honorable members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Human Services,

I am testifying in strong support of the proposed one-time budget allocation of \$600,000 for Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (PPSNE) contained in Article 1, Section 1 for EOHHS of the proposed FY 2027 budget (H 7127). This funding will cover the cost of preventive care such as cancer screenings, STI testing and treatment, birth control, and other essential health care for patients who are now blocked from using their Medicaid insurance at PPSNE due to the “defund” provision in the federal H.R.1 law passed in July 2025. PPSNE is a safety net provider serving nearly 10,000 patients last year in Rhode Island. Patients are counting on the state to step in and backfill the blocked federal funding so PPSNE can continue to serve patients who need care now and in the future.

I have seen firsthand how critical timely, compassionate reproductive healthcare can be. Both of my sisters-in-law experienced several complicated pregnancies where, due to serious medical risks, they needed immediate access to protect their health and their lives. These were not abstract policy debates, they were urgent, deeply human moments that required trusted medical guidance and access to safe, trusted care. That experience drives my advocacy. I believe everyone deserves access to affordable, high-quality preventative care and the freedom to make their own healthcare decisions with dignity. Protecting access to providers like Planned Parenthood ensures people can get the care they need—without fear, delay, or unnecessary obstacles.

Planned Parenthood health centers play an extremely vital role in our health care system. In many communities, they are the only provider of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care, and one in three women has relied on a Planned Parenthood health center for care. In Fiscal Year 2025, nearly 10,000 patients received care from PPSNE through the Providence health center and telehealth services. Of those, 24% (more than 2,300 patients) relied on Medicaid to access care. PPSNE serves a diverse patient population in Rhode Island: nearly half identify as people of color (23% Hispanic, 13% Black, 3% multiracial, 3% Asian), while 39% identify as white and 19% as other or unknown. Additionally, 89% of patients identify as women, and 90% are age 20 or older. Ensuring continued access to these services is essential to protecting public health, advancing health equity, and making certain that individuals and families can receive timely, affordable, and compassionate care when they need it most.

Access to reproductive health care remains at risk here in Rhode Island. I support the funding included in H 7127 because every Rhode Islander deserves the ability to receive care from a trusted provider. I strongly urge the committee to approve the proposed \$600,000 allocation to Planned Parenthood of Southern New England in the FY 2027 budget to help sustain critical preventive health services and safeguard patients’ access to care.

Thank you for your consideration,

Matthew Shumate
East Providence, RI