

March 25, 2026

Honorable House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903
HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov

Subject: Testimony in support for H 7127, Article 1 EOHHS Budget

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

My name is Nicole Verdi, I am from Providence. I am on the Board of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (PPSNE) and the Board Chair of Planned Parenthood Votes RI.

I am testifying in strong support of the proposed one-time budget allocation of \$600,000 for 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. 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.

As a Board member, I have seen firsthand the critical role PPSNE plays in our community. PPSNE is not just a health care provider, it is a lifeline for thousands of Rhode Islanders who have nowhere else to turn for affordable, high-quality preventive care. Nearly 10,000 patients visited PPSNE last year alone, and nearly half of them identify as people of color. These are our neighbors, our colleagues, and members of our community who depend on PPSNE for birth control, STI testing and treatment, cancer screenings, and other essential preventive services. For many of them, PPSNE is their sole source of this care.

That access is now under direct threat. Because of H.R. 1 (the so-called “One Big Beautiful Bill” signed into law in July 2025), Planned Parenthood health centers can no longer be reimbursed for the preventive services they provide to patients on Medicaid. Over 2,300 of PPSNE’s Rhode Island patients relied on Medicaid coverage for their care. Nationwide, this unconstitutional law has already forced 23 Planned Parenthood health centers to permanently close, leaving thousands of patients without options. We cannot allow that to happen here.

I am motivated to advocate for this funding because reproductive health care is health care — full stop. When patients lose access to a trusted provider, the consequences ripple outward: undetected cancers, untreated infections, unintended pregnancies, and mounting costs for our entire health system. Protecting access to PPSNE is not just a reproductive rights issue; it is a public health imperative and a matter of basic equity.

Rhode Island has an opportunity, and a responsibility, to step up where the federal government has failed its citizens. Twelve other states, including our neighbors Connecticut and Massachusetts, have already acted to protect their Medicaid patients' access to Planned Parenthood. Rhode Island should join them.

I urge this committee to support the proposed \$600,000 allocation to Planned Parenthood of Southern New England in the FY 2027 budget. This funding will ensure that Rhode Islanders can continue to visit their trusted provider for the preventive care they need and deserve, regardless of what is happening in Washington.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to the health and well-being of all Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

Nicole M. Verdi, Esq.
21 Lynde Street
Providence, RI 02908