

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND



Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

14 Harrington Road

Cranston, RI 02920-3080

TEL: (401) 462-3201

FAX: (401) 462-3204

TDD: (401) 462-6087

April 9, 2024

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Chair
House Committee on Health & Human Services
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: 2024 – H 7884 – An Act Relating To Health And Safety – Rhode Island's Children Deserve Help Not Harm Act – Minor's Gender Transition

Dear Chair Donovan:

Please accept this letter of opposition to **H 7884**, an act that would prohibit gender transition procedures for all minors, use of public funds for that purpose, discipline for health care providers for providing same, a thirty (30) year statute of limitation, and right to a civil action for damages. The Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) supports accessibility to the full range of transgender treatments for youth who experience gender dysphoria. H 7884 would prohibit a minor from receiving any transgender treatment, ranging from hormonal treatment to gender reassignment surgery.

This legislation does not take into consideration the well-documented mental health issues that exist among individuals who experience gender dysphoria, including anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and completed suicides. According to the American Medical Association, the higher suicide risk for individuals who are transgender or gender diverse is largely the result of stigma, discrimination, and mistreatment—and not a result of the individual's status as a transgender or gender diverse person.

Multiple national medical organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American College of Obstetrician and Gynecologists, American Psychiatric Association, as well as the World Health Organization, support providing transgender and gender diverse youth access to the health care they need. In their policy statements regarding gender-affirming care for adolescents, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychiatric Association also oppose legislative efforts which would limit access to needed care for transgender and gender diverse youth and would impose legal sanctions to health care providers who offer these services.

According to a [bulletin](#) published by the Office of Population Affairs at the federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), “[f]or transgender and nonbinary children and adolescents, early gender affirming care is crucial to overall health and well-being as it allows the child or adolescent to focus on social transitions and can increase their confidence while navigating the healthcare system.” Furthermore, “[m]edical and psychosocial gender affirming healthcare practices have been demonstrated

to yield lower rates of adverse mental health outcomes, build self-esteem, and improve overall quality of life for transgender and gender diverse youth.”^{1,2}

For the above-stated reasons, BHDDH respectfully urges this honorable committee to withhold favorable consideration of H 7884.

Sincerely,



Richard Leclerc
Director

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health & Human Services
The Honorable Patricia L. Morgan
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy

¹ Wagner J, Sackett-Taylor AC, Hodax JK, Forcier M, Rafferty J. (2019). Psychosocial Overview of Gender-Affirmative Care. *Journal of pediatric and adolescent gynecology*, (6):567-573. doi: 10.1016/j.jpag.2019.05.004. Epub 2019 May 17. PMID: 31103711

² Hughto JMW, Gunn HA, Rood BA, Pantalone DW. (2020). Social and Medical Gender Affirmation Experiences Are Inversely Associated with Mental Health Problems in a U.S. Non-Probability Sample of Transgender Adults. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 49(7):2635-2647. doi: 10.1007/s10508-02001655-5. Epub 2020 Mar 25. PMID: 32215775; PMCID: PMC7494544