

February 24, 2025

Linnea Bjornson, RN-BSN  
Registered Nurse at Island Retreat a Medical Spa

Dear Clerk Sepe,

My name is Linnea Bjornson, and I am the lead registered nurse at Island Retreat a Medical Spa here in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. I am writing in support of Bill H-5351, and would like to share my perspective on how this bill would affect our business, the healthcare industry, and the broader economic landscape in Rhode Island.

Island Retreat has been a family-run business for over a decade, owned by my mother, Alicia Bjornson, and my uncle, Christopher Hummel. Since I was in seventh grade, it has been my dream to take over this business, and now, after hundreds of thousands of dollars invested in education, I am prepared to continue the family legacy. Unfortunately, if this bill does not pass, it will threaten to take away our entire livelihood.

I have been a lifelong resident of Rhode Island, and my mother has been a leader in the medical esthetics industry for almost 30 years. Forbes Magazine recognized her expertise when they interviewed her to demonstrate the medical-grade VI Peel, underscoring her unmatched experience and education in this field. This is why we believe that experience and education, when performed within scope, should be valued as highly as the tier of practitioner when it comes to providing medical services.

I'd like to highlight the rising demand for healthcare providers, especially in Rhode Island, where some counties have a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) score as high as 19. If the RIDOH recommendations become legally binding this means that the scope of Nurse Practitioners would become limited ultimately exacerbating existing workforce shortages, particularly in primary care, mental health, and rural healthcare settings, where NPs play a crucial role.

The economic impact of NPs cannot be overstated. Nurse Practitioners offer services at a lower cost than physicians, helping to mitigate the financial strain on the healthcare system. Regarding the broader economic landscape, although precise statistics about the number of licensed esthetic practices in Rhode Island are not publicly available, I can share that, in 2023, medical spas in the U.S. generated an average revenue of \$1.4 million annually. This indicates the significant contribution medical spas make to the economy, and Rhode Island's small businesses, which make up nearly 99% of all businesses in the state, and are vital to our local economy.

Furthermore, the healthcare industry in Rhode Island has a strong female presence, with women representing 48.5% of the workforce and owning 43.2% of small businesses in the state. Given that 84% of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) in Rhode Island are women, restricting their scope of practice would directly affect a vital sector of the workforce and harm female business owners.

It's also important to recognize the mental health benefits of medical spa procedures. Studies show that individuals who undergo cosmetic procedures often experience a reduction in depressive symptoms, improved self-esteem, body image, and quality of life. With a mental health shortage in Rhode Island, which has an average HPSA score of 17.3, the disruption of small businesses like ours that provide these services would only exacerbate the crisis, ultimately depriving residents of the psychological benefits these procedures offer.

Finally, the consequences of this bill would be devastating not only for small business owners, but also for the many Rhode Islanders who depend on these services. The psychological toll on individuals who would be left unemployed or buried in debt due to the closure of their businesses would only add to the mental health crisis in the state. People may be forced to relocate to other states with more favorable conditions for their careers, which would lead to the loss of valuable talent and further damage to our local economy.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge you to support Bill H-5351, as it would not only protect small businesses like ours, but also benefit the healthcare system and the broader economy of Rhode Island. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
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