

Dear Madame Chairwoman and Esteemed Members of the Health Committee:

My name is Moe Vela. I am grateful for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5428 with you this evening.

Twenty-one months ago, after I finished creating, co-producing and co-starring in a reality TV show in Hollywood, I chose Rhode Island out of all 50 states to call home. I chose Lil Rhody because of her multicultural diversity, incredible natural resources and, frankly, her people. Each of you. I saw in Rhode Island, people who care about one another, who share a spirit of equality and inclusion, and I was yearning for a sense of community that is so much a part of the Rhode Island spirit. Best decision I've ever made. It is in that spirit I come today.

Forty years ago, yesterday, I drafted my first piece of legislation as the Legislative Director to a member of the Texas House of Representatives. I went on to draft another 23 and since then I became a regulatory and public policy attorney, consultant, media commentator, ran a national trade association, was senior executive at a REIT, co-owned a multifamily real estate development company, and had the incredible honor and privilege of making a small bit of American history. I am the first Hispanic American and the first LGBT American to serve twice in the White House in senior executive role. First as CFO and Sr. Advisor to Vice President I Gore and several years later I was Deputy Chief of Staff for Management and Administration to then Vice President Joe Biden.

I share all of that to simply demonstrate that legislation, law and policy have been a way of life for me, both in the public and private sectors.

In those 40 years of incredible experiences, I have come to a conclusion that is relevant today. I firmly believe that every elected official in this nation, whether it be local, state or federal, has an essential and sacred responsibility to their constituents and fellow citizens. TO PROTECT, PREVENT AND PROVIDE.

In the case of HB 5428, you have the opportunity to exercise the trifecta of your responsibilities.

By not passing this legislation, you will be putting every single Rhode Islander at risk. The current statute in question is ambiguous and unclear. Leaving the door open for the inevitable loss of life or damage that will occur when a less-qualified, less-educated, and less-trained healthcare professional is allowed to administer anesthetic drugs. This is your time to PROTECT your constituents and fellow Rhode Islanders.

By passing this legislation, you will be doing the right thing by being PROCTIVE AND PREVENTING the unnecessary death of an innocent child, family member, co-parishioner, colleague or fellow citizen. It matters not whether someone is engaging in this practice or not, the thought that they could because of the lack of clarity should be enough to act. Please be proactive and PREVENT.

Lastly, I implore you to PROVIDE the leadership required. By voting in favor of this legislation you will be providing the vision and foresight needed to eliminate the ambiguity in the current code, mitigate the risks, and put in place the guardrails that every Rhode Islander deserves.

I've never met a Mayor in this country who waits until a fatal accident occurs at an intersection before they put in a stop sign or traffic signal. Let's not wait until someone uses this loophole and causes someone's death as a result. We must always put people over profits. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and I thank you each for your service.