

Steven Sepe

From: Diana Wohler <diana.wohler@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 10:00 AM
To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Subject: Testimony in SUPPORT for H 5629

Dear Chair Donovan and distinguished members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Diana Wohler, I am from North Kingstown, RI. I am a family physician who provides obstetrical care, including prenatal and pre-conception care, in West Warwick RI.

I am testifying in strong support of House Bill 5629 (Rep. Alzate). This bill will improve access to family building health care by aligning fertility health care insurance coverage with the medical standard of care, which clearly includes LGBTQ+ and single people, among others, so more Rhode Island residents have the opportunity to build their family. Fertility health care is essential for building families.

As someone who cares for LGBTQ patients at Thundermist Health Center, whose barrier to building their families is simply their gametes, and who are frequently denied participation in the adoption process due to their identity, I can tell you how heartbreaking it is to tell a loving adult and would-be parent that insurance has made the decision for them whether or not they can build a loving family of their own. I have seen incredibly dysphoric, even suicidal patients delay life-saving testosterone treatment because they are worried about the possibility of having biological children in the future and not having egg-banking services covered by insurance, when if they had breast cancer and were faced with similarly life-saving treatment decisions, such fertility preservation and family building services would be covered.

Under the narrow definition of current RI law, which is not even in line with the current definition from the American Society of Reproductive Medicine, single individuals and LGBTQ+ families cannot build their families. Limits on access to IVF and other fertility health care especially burden LGBTQ+ families and transgender people — the same people facing so many attacks on their reproductive freedom, basic healthcare, and personal autonomy. This is an important reproductive justice issue. Every person should have access to the care they need, including fertility health care, to decide if, when, and how they have children and build their families.

I support H 5629 because access to family-building health care such as IVF and IUI is essential health care for so many people in our state. This is an urgent reproductive and economic justice issue because all people have the right to have children regardless of who they are or how much they earn. With the current hostile political landscape for reproductive health, our state must do everything we can to stand for the fundamental right for people to be able to decide whether, when, and how to have children. I urge the committee and legislature to vote favorably for H 5629 to improve fertility health care coverage and update our state law, which is outdated and doesn't reflect the standard of health care, so more Rhode Island residents have access to the essential medical care they need to build their families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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