

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

My name is Hannah Chambers-Lindquist, I am from Cranston, RI. My wife and I have been trying to build our family for 4 years.

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 families.

Fertility health care is essential for building these families.

As a lesbian couple, my wife and I had to “prove” our infertility before we gained access to any coverage. For us, this included a battery of testing, a polypectomy surgery, four rounds of IUI (intrauterine insemination), and purchasing multiple vials of donor sperm.

My wife has endometriosis, and our fertility clinic recommended that prior to any IUI or other treatment, she needed to have surgery (a polypectomy) to make conception more likely. Although recommended by our doctor as a precursor to any fertility treatment, this diagnosis, along with her diagnosis of endometriosis, was not enough for us to qualify as “infertile” and receive any assistance at all from our insurance company. The total cost for us, prior to anything at all being covered by our insurance, was approximately \$12,000.

We were forced to pay out of pocket for all of the above: the testing that let us know she needed surgery, the surgery itself, and the four subsequent IUI treatments as well as the accompanying donor sperm necessary for the IUI. This drained our savings and was so costly that we turned to family for financial assistance. Our savings and the option of family help were privileges that many LGBTQ community members do not have access to.

After four rounds of IUI, we had to purchase additional donor sperm to continue our family-building journey with IVF. Although our insurance is now covering us, the costs are still staggering. A non-LGBTQ+ couple, when family-building with pregnancy, would not have been asked to go through such extraordinary measures to “prove” infertility. In fact, those couples that I know have simply been asked by their doctors to share how long they have been “trying.” For those of us who are unable to conceive naturally, no amount of “trying” will help, and this practice discriminates against not only LGBTQ+ families but also single parents by choice.

The current Rhode Island law has put huge barriers in front of us and other LGBTQ+ families. There are many families who would not have had the option to go to the lengths that we have, either personally or financially. By the time we (hopefully) achieve our dream of having a child, we will have spent upwards of \$30,000 and years of our time and effort. As an elementary school teacher, this is a monumental cost.

My wife and I have wanted to be parents for a long time. We have been planning and dreaming about our family since we got married in 2019. I support H 5629 because access to family-building healthcare such as IVF is essential. This is a vital reproductive and economic justice issue; 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 healthcare coverage and update our state law, which is outdated and doesn't reflect the standard of healthcare today, so more Rhode Island residents have access to the essential medical care they need to build their families. My wife and I are still working toward having our own child, despite the numerous hardships. Please make fertility access more equitable so that others seeking to build their families do not struggle the way that we have.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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