



**The American College of
Obstetricians and Gynecologists**
WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE PHYSICIANS

Office of the Rhode Island Section Chair
Beth Cronin, MD, FACOG

April 23, 2025

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

My name is Beth Cronin and I am a practicing Obstetrician and Gynecologist in Providence, RI and the RI Section Chair for the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. The RI Section of ACOG represents more than 140 physicians and partners in reproductive health care in our state. ACOG is a leading authority on reproductive health care and is committed to public policy based on facts and evidence-based medicine. ACOG believes that all people should have access to the full spectrum of comprehensive, evidence-based health care.

I am writing in **strong support of House Bill 5857 (Rep. Knight)**. This bill is an important step to protect sensitive consumer health data related to reproductive and gender-affirming health care. This is urgently needed following the overturning of Roe in the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* and the increased attacks on access to reproductive and gender-affirming health care across the country. This bill will ensure Rhode Island follows through on its promise to be a safe harbor for our residents and those who seek care within our state's boundaries and is an essential next step after passing the Healthcare Provider Shield Act last session. I am so incredibly grateful to everyone who worked so hard to ensure passage of that legislation and hopeful that this bill will receive similar attention.

I am a full-scope Ob/Gyn caring for Rhode Islanders who need reproductive health care at Women & Infants Hospital. As part of my practice, I perform a significant amount of gender affirming care. The transgender and gender diverse community has never been under a greater attack than it is under the current presidential administration. This bill is critical to ensuring that all Rhode Islanders can access the care that they need without fear. Patients need to be able to safely, comfortably come to my office to see me or my partners for whatever reason they need care that day.

Given the current political climate, I worry about whether my patients should use modern technology (period tracking/fertility apps) to track their cycles when planning to try to achieve a pregnancy or using it as a method to avoid pregnancy. Period tracker apps are incredibly helpful for folks in a variety of situations, but we can not ensure that they won't be used against them in the future. In this post- Roe landscape where many states are rapidly moving to criminalize abortion care and jeopardize access, data shared between companies, private parties, and the government are already being utilized to surveil, penalize, target and harass individuals accessing health care and their support networks. Putting individuals' personal information at risk is terrifying and incredibly dangerous.

The world of technology, artificial intelligence and data privacy is rapidly evolving. Since the Dobbs decision, many concerns have been raised about data privacy and safeguarding personal information from potential weaponization against patients and providers. This bill will ban the use of geofencing for tracking, meaning it will be illegal to create a geofence around healthcare facilities that provide reproductive or gender-affirming services to track individuals seeking care. We need to act now to ensure that patient's private information stays private and isn't used to track whether they are coming to my clinic for a gender affirming care discussion, seeing my colleague to discuss contraception, or going to another clinic to receive

an abortion. We need to ensure that everyone maintains their bodily autonomy and reproductive freedom and can access healthcare whenever and wherever they need it without fear of retribution.

This bill will give consumers more control over their personal data that is generated through various means, including period trackers, fitness apps, location-based services, and even at brick-and-mortar establishments, all of which may demonstrate or provide a means of identifying or predicting someone's pregnancy status or other identifying information about their identity including gender identity.

In 2025, with the current messaging from the federal government, we need to quickly pass this bill to protect Rhode Islanders by strengthening privacy and confidentiality protections for reproductive health and gender-affirming health care. The Dobbs decision changed the privacy landscape- and it's our responsibility to further protect patients seeking legally protected health care in Rhode Island which is why I **strongly support H 5857**. This is the next crucial step in ensuring that everyone can safely access the health care that they need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Beth Cronin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Beth Cronin, MD
RI Section Chair, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Division Director, Division of General Obstetrics and Gynecology
Women & Infants Hospital