

Dear Chair Donovan and Members of the Committee:

My name is Maureen Morrow and I am a retired Certified Nurse Midwife, a Rhode Island resident, and member of the American College of Nurse Midwives. I open with the following passage, taken directly from the Project 2025 official web site:

“The project will create a playbook of actions to be taken in the first 180 days of the new Administration to bring quick relief to Americans suffering from the Left’s devastating policies.

Writing in support of HB 5857, I wish to remind members that we are now around the 100-day mark of the Trump administration. Project 2025’s 180-day “playbook” is being implemented on a daily basis with dismantling of entire agencies, the hollowing out of others, and the presence of rogue players in every Department including Treasury and the Social Security Administration. Data once thought to be private, is being accessed with little oversight.

Furthermore, the Trump administration, using Project 2025 as its guide, plans to push for a complete abortion ban. Part of that plan acknowledges that it will need to surveil health care data. After the Dobb’s decision, President Biden had rules entered into the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, known as HIPAA, to specifically protect patient specific data regarding reproductive care. While HIPAA’s goal in 1996 was to establish federal standards protecting sensitive health information from disclosure without patient’s consent, the Biden administration went further stating:

“The Final Rule strengthens privacy protections by prohibiting the use or disclosure of protected health information (PHI) by a covered health care provider, health plan, or health care clearinghouse—or their business associate—for either of the following activities:

- To conduct a criminal, civil, or administrative investigation into or impose criminal, civil, or administrative liability on any person for the mere act of seeking, obtaining, providing, or facilitating reproductive health care, where such health care is lawful under the circumstances in which it is provided.
- The identification of any person for the purpose of conducting such investigation or imposing such liability.”

(<https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/reproductive-health/final-rule-fact-sheet/index.html>)

States have already pushed back and the Trump administration will surely go after this rule as it pursues its wholesale assault on reproductive care.

Rhode Island has been proactive in recent years regarding reproductive rights. I urge you to do the same regarding data privacy. HB5857, if passed, will provide necessary protections such as requiring affirmative consent regarding reproductive and gender affirming care information sharing, limiting data collection to what is necessary, give consumers control over their data allowing them to withdraw consent at any time, and banning geofencing, a truly frightening “big brother” approach to the enforcement of whatever new laws that Trump and the Project 2025 playbook push upon the American people.

Now is the time to act. We are approaching 180 days.

Sincerely,

Maureen Morrow, CNM, MSN, MPH