

Chairperson Robert Craven
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

March 5, 2024

Dear Chairperson Craven:

I am writing in strong support of H7577, the Health Care Provider Shield Bill. I am a pediatrician and a child psychiatrist who practices both gender affirming medical and psychiatric care. This legislation is very important to me and my health care colleagues, and the patients we serve.

This legislation is about Rhode Island's ability to protect health care providers, patients and access to essential care. The bill protects established, best-practice medical care that is legal in Rhode Island and ensures our local providers and health care infrastructure aren't negatively impacted by hostile laws in other states.

This legislation is necessary because these laws have the potential to interfere with delivery of health care in Rhode Island and create a chilling effect for providers like me.

I want to practice in a state that protects me and my patients, and so do other providers. In order for Rhode Island to ensure the viability of our health delivery system it is imperative that Rhode Island remains a competitive practice environment. This common-sense legislation brings Rhode Island in line with 11 states, including neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut.

More than 20 states have enacted bans on essential, established medical care which exert extraordinary control over people's lives and **even impose civil and criminal penalties on providers for practicing medicine in line with the professional standards of care.** These bans have the potential to cross state lines and impact providers here.

I can testify as a direct witness to how essential gender affirmative care is to many children and families who are confused and facing difficult decisions in the context of so much misinformation and political debate. I went to medical school to learn science so that I could help people navigate challenging healthcare decisions and support through some of the toughest times in their life. It is not about my personal politics or beliefs, it is about providing accurate, evidence-based information and empathy to people who are suffering so that they use their autonomy to make decisions they know will be respected, even if they are not perfect. Gender affirmative care is about respecting the dignity and experiences

of individuals, and joining them in partnership through a process of self-discovery. It does not imply any specific outcome, label, or treatment – a point that is often misrepresented. In that regard, it is most definitely life-saving and empowering care.

I appreciate the support the legislature has shown the provider community in the past and respectfully request your continued support through passage of this vital legislation. Please contact me at [contact info, only include this if you want your contact info public] if I can provide any additional information or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Rafferty', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jason Rafferty, MD, MPH, EdM
Pediatrician & Child Psychiatrist licensed in the State of RI