



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

Re: H7577: Relating to Health and Safety - Health Care Provider Shield Bill

March 5, 2024

Dear Chairperson Craven,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Rhode Island Academy of Family Physicians (RIAFP) in strong support of H7577, the Health Care Provider Shield Bill. We are the professional organization for family physicians in Rhode Island, promoting and maintaining high quality standards for family doctors who provide continuing comprehensive health care to the public. Our organization views this legislation as critical to protect our provider community and the patients we serve.

This legislation is necessary because hostile laws passed in other states have the potential to interfere with delivery of health care in Rhode Island. 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.

**It is imperative that Rhode Island remains a competitive practice environment to ensure the viability of our health delivery system.** Family medicine physicians represent one of the largest groups of primary care physicians in Rhode Island. Many are drawn to the state because the culture of medicine here supports evidence-based, standard-of-care medical practice, including the practice of gender affirming care and comprehensive reproductive health care. **This common-sense legislation brings Rhode Island in line with 11 states, including neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut.** Without this bill we risk losing leaders in family medicine to neighboring states.

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.**

Out-of-state laws banning access to essential medical care takes away people's freedom to make important medical decisions for themselves and their families, informed by guidance from trusted providers, and replaces it with the wishes of politicians. That's not the Rhode Island way.

With people living dynamic lives that see them moving fluidly between states, whether we're talking about young adults going off to college or people who live in different states seasonally, **it is only a matter of**

**time before Rhode Island providers and patients get caught in the crosshairs of the current medico-legal landscape.**

We are grateful for the support the legislature has shown the provider community in the past and respectfully request your continued support through passage of House Bill 7577.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Buckley, MD  
RIAFP President

Katharina de Klerk, DO  
RIAFP Advocacy Committee Chair