



Testimony Re: House Bill 7577 – Health Care Provider Shield Bill
House Judiciary Committee
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT strongly supports House Bill 7577, the *Health Care Provider Shield Bill*. We would like to thank Representative Edwards for sponsoring this bill and Representatives Kislak, Ajello, McNamara, Kazarian, Knight, Donovan, Craven, McEntee, and Felix for co-sponsoring. Our organization stands with our health care providers and their patients.

In May 2001, Rhode Island became the second state in the country to explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression. Since then, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT has testified on the need for the Rhode Island Department of Education to develop a strong policy on the rights and protections of transgender and gender non-conforming students in schools. More recently, we have supported legislation on a student bill of rights and opposed legislation that would have placed restrictions on both curriculum and teaching practices in Rhode Island, prohibited psychological or medical counseling in any school setting, excluded gender identity and sexual orientation in sex education, required educators to use names and pronouns associated with a student's biological gender instead of their gender identity, and established disciplinary measures against educators for violation of these provisions.

We support this legislation because it 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.

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.** This legislation will protect providers and their patients and ensure the viability of the health delivery system.

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 this vital legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.