

Testimony in SUPPORT for H 7577
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Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee
Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Chair Craven and honorable members of the House Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England with **strong support for House Bill 7577 (Rep. Edwards) to protect legal, standard-of-care reproductive and transgender medical care for patients and providers.** Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (PPSNE), provided sexual and reproductive health care to over 7,000 patients last year at our Providence health center. We believe all people should have access to quality, affordable, and compassionate health care as a basic human right — regardless of who you are, where you live, your income, if you have health insurance or your immigration status.

Since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022, we have continued to witness the devastating consequences of abortion bans and restrictions on patients and the larger health care ecosystem. The post *Dobbs* reality is even more devastating and inhumane than we could have imagined. It is also now harder for people to get lifesaving medical care for miscarriages, ectopic pregnancies, and other pregnancy-related complications. Today, 21 states have banned some or all abortions and those states are also banning gender-affirming care.

We know that anti-abortion rights lawmakers and justices will not stop at banning abortion — they are working toward a broader agenda to roll back our rights and freedoms, from access to affordable birth control, transgender health care, fertility health care, to LGBTQ+ rights and more. **As more states continue to ban abortion and essential health care for transgender people, it is essential that we protect our health care providers and patients who receive care within our borders from the egregious overreach of politicians in states across the country.**

It is time to fight back against other states' laws that are targeting patients and providers in our state. This bill makes it clear that our state leaders are prioritizing abortion access and doing everything they can to protect those who provide this essential health care and health care for transgender people. We must do all we can to try to ensure that everyone can safely get care. We thank Governor McKee for taking swift action to protect reproductive health care providers and patients access in his [Executive Order](#), Now it is critical that the legislature puts in place stronger statutory protections that includes reproductive and transgender health care services.

H7577 is about protecting providers and health care for patients who need it in Rhode Island because providers should be able to deliver best-practice reproductive and transgender health care to patients without the fear of repercussions from other states' laws. H7577 will make it clear that access to reproductive health care and essential medical care for transgender people are legal rights in Rhode Island and protect our health care providers from abusive civil or criminal litigation from other states.

Rhode Island faces a health care infrastructure crisis with workforce shortages and difficulty in recruiting and maintaining health care providers to stay and this legislation it will help ensure our state remains a desirable place to practice reproductive health care. Without a shield to protect providers, Rhode Island could see our health care infrastructure worsen with providers choosing to practice in states where they will be legally protected. Rhode Island would not be alone in passing such protections: eleven other states - including Massachusetts and Connecticut - and the District of Columbia have already passed similar health care provider shield laws.

Health care is a fundamental human right that should be guaranteed to all people in our state and across this county. Planned Parenthood will continue to fight for policies that protect the rights of all people to ensure our providers, patients, and communities have what they need to live healthy and self-determined lives. No one's health should be compromised, or health care access denied because of who they are or where they live. We must protect patients who need care today. Providers and patients deserve a shield against enforcement from other states when they seek legal health care in Rhode Island, and we urge the committee to vote in support of H7577.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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