

Testimony in OPPOSITION against House Bills 5295, 5296, and 5661
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House Committee on Judiciary
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Chair Craven and honorable members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight Planned Parenthood of Southern New England's **strong opposition to three anti-abortion bills being heard today: H5295, H5296 and H5661**. Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (PPSNE) provided sexual and reproductive health care to nearly 8,000 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.

In no uncertain terms, access to abortion was devastated by the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* causing a public health crisis. We are at a critical moment in our country. Our basic health care and rights are on the line. Lawmakers hostile to reproductive health and rights want to escalate restrictions on abortion access, birth control, transgender health care, IVF and shut down health centers, including Planned Parenthood.

We know the dangers and risks patients face when they are denied the health care they need and have heard horrific stories of pregnant people being denied lifesaving pregnancy related care in hospital emergency rooms across the country due to abortion bans or severe restrictions on abortion care in 19 states since the *Dobbs* decision which has left more than 25 million women of reproductive age, plus trans and nonbinary people, without access to abortion in their home states.

Thankfully, because of the actions of the Rhode Island General Assembly in the past six years abortion is legally protected and accessible health care in our state and additional protections for providers and patients were enacted last session with the Healthcare Provider Shield Act. Rhode Island has emerged as a leader in protecting and defending reproductive freedom in our country, which is why this committee must reject these dangerous anti-abortion bills introduced this session.

Here is the truth about abortion: abortion care is health care, abortion is normal, abortion is part of reproductive health care, it is one of the safest medical procedures. In the United States, abortion has a safety record of over 99%. Nearly a fourth of women in America will have an abortion by age 45. Every decision about pregnancy is deeply personal regardless of the pregnancy outcome – and every person deserves the right to make their own decision about their pregnancy with respect, free from shame and stigma, and without political interference. Legislators pushing these bills have one goal: continuing to attack our rights and freedoms. The General Assembly's focus should be on addressing existing barriers to reproductive health care instead of pushing these bills which are redundant and unnecessary and would only add barriers for people who need to access to time sensitive and safe, legal abortion care.

H 5295 Born-Alive Infant Protection Act and H 5296 Relating to Criminal Offenses-Children are unnecessary and advance gross mischaracterizations that have no factual basis in medical science and represents a dangerous attempt to restrict access to safe and legal abortion. The true aim of these bills is not based in science or in health care; instead, they are meant to shame and stigmatize doctors who provide abortions and patients who need access to essential, time sensitive, safe and legal abortion care. Doctors already have an obligation to provide appropriate medical care and adhere to state laws and regulations and to suggest otherwise is false, offensive, and dangerous. (See: [R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-9-18](#)) This dangerous legislation is aimed squarely at limiting access to abortion care and interfering in the doctor-patient relationship.

H 5661 Procedure in Particular Actions- Death by Wrongful Act would allow wrongful death suits for the "death of a child in utero" at any stage of pregnancy and undermine the reproductive rights and autonomy of pregnant people in this state. The loss of a wanted pregnancy is tragic, especially when it could have been prevented. However, patients can already sue their doctors under medical malpractice laws if the doctor's negligence caused a miscarriage. This bill could also allow abusers to use the judicial system to attack and penalize pregnant people for exercising their right to an abortion, or for a pregnancy loss. No person should ever fear investigation or judicial action when facing a pregnancy loss. Wrongful death bills like H5661 will not deter doctors from negligent actions -- medical malpractice laws already exist for that purpose. These bills could, however, have a chilling effect on doctors' willingness to treat patients with risky pregnancies or with complications arising from pregnancy and to provide abortion care.

With reproductive rights and abortion access under constant threat from all levels of the federal government, the General Assembly should be focusing their attention on proactive policies (H 5006) and not bills that would further criminalize it. People must have the freedom to make decisions about their pregnancy in consultation with their doctor, not politicians. **That is why we strongly urge this committee to vote no on H 5295, H 5296 and H 5661.** These bills are a blatant attempt to undermine an individual's right to abortion and go against the belief of 70% of Rhode Islanders who think abortion should be legal in all or most cases. Thank you for your time and consideration.



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