

TO: House Judiciary Committee

RE: STRONGEST SUPPORT for H 7548

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I am an Emergency Physician practicing on the front lines here in Rhode Island. I am writing to urge your support for **H 7548**, a bill that is as much about human decency and patient healing as it is about legal reform.

In the Emergency Department, I frequently care for patients during their most vulnerable moments. When a patient dies or suffers an unanticipated outcome—whether due to a medical error or simply the natural progression of a cruel disease—my first instinct is to offer comfort.

However, Rhode Island's current legal environment has fundamentally broken the bridge of empathy between physicians and families. We are trained by risk management to be guarded and clinical. We are taught that a simple, human expression of "I am so sorry for what your family is going through" can be twisted in a courtroom into a confession of guilt. This forces a "wall of silence" that makes us appear cold and detached at the very moment a grieving family needs us to be human.

While this bill protects physicians, it is **equally, if not more, beneficial for patients and families**. Silence from a doctor is often interpreted by families as "hiding something," which breeds resentment and prolongs the grieving process. National data shows that when doctors are empowered to be transparent and empathetic, the anger that fuels most lawsuits dissipates. Families don't want a five-year legal battle; they want an honest conversation.

Rhode Island has some of the highest malpractice rates and per capita payouts in the country. This "crazy" legal environment drives away specialists and forces those of us who stay to practice defensive medicine, which increases costs for every Rhode Islander and increased risk of burn out for physicians.

The only parties who stand to lose from H 7548 are malpractice lawyers who profit from the confusion and silence created by our current rules of evidence. In the 38 other states that have passed "I'm Sorry" laws, litigation has decreased because communication replaces confrontation.

I urge you to pass H 7548 so that I can stop being a "potential defendant" in the ED and start being a doctor again.

Respectfully,

Kate Moretti MD, MS