
To: House Committee on Judiciary
From: Care New England
Date: February 11, 2026
Subject: **Support for H 7548**

Dear Chairwoman McEntee and members of the Committee,

Care New England (CNE) is in support of H 7548, and we would like to thank Representative Fogarty for her leadership on this issue. This bill does not have an impact on the state budget.

CNE Health System is a trusted, integrated health care organization that fuels the latest advances in medical research, attracts the nation's top specialty-trained doctors, hones renowned services and innovative programs, and engages in the important discussions people need to have about their health. CNE is helping to transform the future of health care, providing a leading voice in the ongoing effort to ensure the health of the individuals and communities we serve. With over 8,000 employees throughout Rhode Island, we are the fourth largest employer and second largest health system in the Ocean State.

Rhode Island shares an equal challenge with our New England states in that the healthcare industry is facing historic staffing shortages. Unfortunately, where **Rhode Island is the outlier is that we are the only state in New England that does not have a physician apology law**. Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine have enacted a version of a physician apology law to make expressions of sympathy and the like inadmissible in medical malpractice lawsuits. **Thirty-nine of the fifty states have physician apology laws in some form, leaving Rhode Island in the minority on this issue.**

There are many challenges impacting physicians and other healthcare provider recruitment and retention in Rhode Island. We cannot allow a major roadblock to the physician-patient relationship (fear of liability and licensure action for open, honest patient communications) to compound the other significant, complex issues facing healthcare. Passing H 7548 is one small step to placing Rhode Island on equal footing with our neighboring healthcare markets.

Beyond staffing, H 7548 encourages good clinical practice. Physicians' professional ethics require them to communicate clearly and honestly with patients regarding unanticipated outcomes. Fear of medical malpractice repercussions should be the last thought our physicians have as they assist patients and their families to face, address, and overcome unanticipated medical outcomes. However, the current state of the law requires physicians and healthcare providers to choose their words carefully and anticipate how comments following an unanticipated outcome will later impact a lawsuit against them. This looming threat harms doctors, healthcare providers, and most importantly, Rhode Islanders of every background who are the patients of these doctors and healthcare providers. **H 7548 will allow physicians and healthcare providers to place their focus on patient care over risk mitigation.**

CNE understands that physician apology laws have been introduced in Rhode Island before without passing, but we are hopeful that in this moment, when healthcare access is an issue facing all Rhode Islanders, our legislators will show their support for dedicated physicians and healthcare workers by voting in favor of a law that will allow them to practice with less trepidation and more focus where our undivided attention should always be – on patients.

CNE supports H 7548 and encourages the committee to pass this critical healthcare initiative. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Robert Dulski, Director of Government Affairs for CNE, RDulski@CareNE.org. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Robert Dulski
Director, Government Affairs
Care New England