



Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

**Testimony in Support of 26-H 7198,
AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES - GENERAL PROVISIONS
House Committee on Judiciary
Hannah Stern - Director, Public Policy and Government Relations
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
March 4, 2026**

Dear Chair McEntee and honorable members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

In my capacity as the Director, Public Policy and Government Relations at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (PPSNE), I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony **in support of House Bill H 7198**. PPSNE provided sexual and reproductive health care to nearly 10,000 Rhode Island patients last year and believes 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.

People achieve reproductive freedom when they have full autonomy over their bodies and lives – this not only includes access to health care, but the ability to live in communities that are not over-policed; the ability to live without fear of having families torn apart; and to live without fear of harm from discriminatory policies. In particular, access to health care is stymied when patients feel anxious that their seeking of that health care could contribute to severe immigration consequences, including detention and deportation. Especially at a time where immigration enforcement has been dramatically increased, small adjustments in state law can go a long way in giving assurance that immigrants won't face substantial repercussions for technicalities.

This legislation would address a small discrepancy between state law – which sets the maximum *potential* sentence for a misdemeanor offense of *up to* one year – and federal law – which permits detention and deportation for offenses that carry a *potential* sentence of a year or more. Under this language, legal immigrants, such as green card holders or lawful permanent residents, could face immigration impacts for extremely minor offenses for which they served no prison time at all. This bill will reduce the maximum potential

sentence in state law to 364 days, ensuring there is no confusion or overlap with this federal statute.

When patients delay or forgo health care because of the possible collateral effects on their lives, access to health care is restricted. PPSNE supports H 7198 and urges favorable committee action on this bill, which will ease certain concerns about immigration enforcement for extremely minor offenses at a time where immigrants are facing significant federal discrimination rooted in racism and xenophobia. As a state, we have an imperative to protect all Rhode Island residents and to ease – to the best of our abilities – these concerns about such discriminatory federal action.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Stern', is positioned above the typed name.

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