



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT TO H7357

TO: House Judiciary
From: Kelly Nevins, CEO, Women's Fund of Rhode Island
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Women's Fund of Rhode Island invests in women and girls through research, advocacy, grantmaking, and strategic partnerships designed to achieve gender equity through systemic change. Through our programs and policy work, we connect with thousands of Rhode Islanders each year who rely on safe, equitable access to health care.

We strongly support **H7357**, the *Reproductive Health and Gender-Affirming Healthcare Data Privacy Act*. This legislation is a critical step in protecting sensitive health information at a time when reproductive and gender-affirming care are increasingly under attack across the country.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, we have seen states pursue aggressive policies that criminalize abortion care and threaten providers and patients alike. In this environment, digital data, from location tracking to period-tracking apps to online searches, can become evidence used to surveil, target, or harass individuals seeking care. Strong privacy protections are therefore essential to ensuring Rhode Islanders can exercise their right to make personal health decisions without fear.

Importantly, federal protections like HIPAA do not go far enough. HIPAA applies only to traditional healthcare providers and insurers. Yet deeply personal health-related data is routinely collected by apps, retailers, employers, and location-tracking services that fall outside those protections. This bill closes that gap by ensuring that companies collecting sensitive reproductive or gender-affirming health data must obtain explicit consent and limit how that data can be used or shared.

H7357 also gives consumers meaningful control over their personal health data by allowing them to access, delete, or withdraw consent for the use of that data. It prohibits the use of geofencing technology around health care facilities to track individuals seeking care, and it requires transparency about what data is being collected and how it is used.

These protections are particularly important for communities that have historically been subject to disproportionate surveillance and criminalization related to pregnancy and healthcare decisions, including Black, brown, Indigenous, immigrant, and low-income communities, as well as LGBTQ+ individuals.

Rhode Island has taken important steps to protect reproductive and gender-affirming care, including becoming a safe harbor state for providers. Ensuring that sensitive health

data cannot be exploited is the logical next step in protecting patients and providers alike.

Privacy is not optional when it comes to our bodies and our healthcare. H7357 strengthens Rhode Island's commitment to bodily autonomy, health equity, and personal freedom. We urge you to support H7357.

About Women's Fund of Rhode Island

For over 25 years, Women's Fund of Rhode Island has worked to build a Rhode Island where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. We advance gender equity through research, policy advocacy, leadership training, and community investment. Our work has informed major legislative victories, including paid family leave expansion, fair pay protections, and equitable access to reproductive health care. We have trained thousands of leaders and invested over \$1.5 million in local organizations driving change. Learn more at www.wfri.org.