



Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

**Testimony in Support of 26-H 8274,
AN ACT RELATING TO PROPERTY - RHODE ISLAND FAIR HOUSING PRACTICE ACT
House Committee on Judiciary
Hannah Stern - Director, Public Policy and Government Relations
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
March 18, 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 8274**. 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.

Reproductive freedom includes economic security for all, which in turn ensures greater access to health care, critical resources, and, importantly, housing. This legislation provides a small but deeply meaningful change to our state Fair Housing Practice Act by ensuring protections from housing discrimination for individuals based on their housing status.

Housing insecurity – especially previous housing insecurity – should never dictate the ability for individuals to access the resources that they need to fully achieve reproductive freedom. This particularly includes the ability to seek and maintain safe, affordable, and stable housing, which is a necessary component of health equity, economic security, and bodily autonomy. We know that “people experiencing housing instability and chronic homelessness have worse health outcomes, less access to primary care, and higher hospital use than those with stable housing,”¹ but that secure housing allows for an individual’s focus to expand to their ability to access other critical resources for their own

¹ <https://www.chcs.org/resource-center/housing-and-health/>

reproductive freedom such as employment, reliable transportation, and, importantly, consistent health care.

Crossroads Rhode Island reports that between 2020 and 2024, Rhode Island experienced a 394% increase in unsheltered homelessness; and, at the same time, notes that when unhoused people are provided “an adequate supply of affordable housing and appropriate support, more than 90% of those who experience homelessness in Rhode Island each year ultimately achieve self-sufficiency and never become homeless again.”² For any supply of housing to ever be meaningful, it additionally must be that anyone who has lived with housing insecurity be protected from discrimination based off this moment in their life. Otherwise, any other initiative to increase our housing supply and decrease our number of unsheltered and homeless Rhode Islanders may not be as impactful as intended.

Planned Parenthood will continue to fight for policies that protect the rights of all people to ensure that our patients and our communities have what they need to live healthy and self-determined lives. H 8274 is a critical step in ensuring that all Rhode Islanders have the housing security to access the health care that they deserve.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.



Hannah Stern
Director, Public Policy and Government Relations
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
hannah.stern@ppsne.org

² <https://www.crossroadsri.org/housing-services/strategy-solutions/insights-facts-figures>