

Dear House Labor Committee,

I am writing to you to urge you to pass House Bill 7797 on behalf of the people of RI. This bill is 3 years overdue.

In my personal testimony, the covid mandate changed my entire life. I lost my job on October 16th, 2021, as Care New England found it best to dismiss fired its employees 2 weeks after the October 1st deadline for non-compliance. During this time, I was not allowed to collect unemployment; Care New England HR fought that as well. It caused financial hardship for me and my family.

Furthermore, without proof of effectiveness and the denial of adequate scientific evidence, the mandate of vaccines by Care New England and SEUI 1199 both decided at a corporate level to stand in line. The mandating of staff in a private company affected my ability to seek adequate healthcare if it were necessary at the time because my physician was a Care New England physician. (Bring on the monopoly.)

My primary care physician, who also believed I should have been exempt from this vaccine, was mandated by CNE corporate to give NO exemptions to any patient who presented wanting one, even with the appropriate paperwork. My primary care physician left the practice and the State of Rhode Island shortly after telling me she was not allowed to sign. I no longer have a primary care physician since the incident in the State of Rhode Island.

As a nurse, I know my rights as a patient and will advocate for myself and my patients. We encourage patients constantly to seek second options with life altering care, but when it came to our health, our knowledge of the field we work such as basic infection control protocols, and our ability to decipher research, the Governor of the State of Rhode Island, Gina Raimondo fell in line, tucking aside the outcry of rejection to the mandate of masks and vaccination without the right to an exemption.

I support H7797 as this bill will protect private companies from jumping on a devastating band wagon that propagated the massive healthcare and mental health crisis here in the State of Rhode Island. For once, follow the science, follow the protocols of best practice that have been already set in place before creating panic amongst first responders and the community. The state was ill prepared for the results of such rash decision-making and has build huge distrust in the healthcare community. Exemptions must be a requirement when it comes to the health and well-being of individuals as preventative measures were already in place. The requests of this bill are fundamental. These measures are as close to DEI as you'll get in healthcare.

Niyoka Powell