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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

TESTIMONY ON 25-H 6161, RELATING TO FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES ACT April 9, 2025

The ACLU of Rhode Island supports this bill, which would make explicit that employers must provide reasonable accommodations to employees experiencing menopause, just as the law currently requires accommodations for various pregnancy-related conditions. Menopause is a natural and common phase in the lives of millions of individuals, but its impact and symptoms can have profound and long-lasting effects on a person's health and daily life. Legal protections against discrimination and unfair treatment for those going through this transition are essential to ensure equality and support during this pivotal life stage.

Currently, there are legal protections for other medical conditions, such as pregnancy or disability, to ensure that workers are not discriminated against due to circumstances beyond their control. As with other medical conditions, workers should be entitled to accommodations and protections that allow them to remain productive and valued members of the workforce without fear of retaliation or loss of employment. Unfortunately, menopause remains a topic that is often stigmatized or ignored in the workplace. This gap in understanding has led to a lack of appropriate accommodations for workers, leaving many to endure their symptoms in silence.

Including menopause as a condition requiring reasonable accommodations would offer important safeguards against discrimination, and align with the principles of equality and fairness for which the Rhode Island Fair Employment Practices Act was created to uphold. It would ensure that individuals are not penalized for a natural process that is entirely out of their control. Employees should not have to choose between managing their health and maintaining their livelihood. By extending protections to those experiencing menopause, we can ensure that they are given the necessary accommodations to continue performing their jobs effectively.

Thank you for considering our views.