



Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

**Testimony in Support of 26-H 7968,
AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -TEMPORARY DISABILITY
INSURANCE - GENERAL PROVISIONS**

House Committee on Labor

Hannah Stern - Director, Public Policy and Government Relations

Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

March 5, 2026

Dear Chair Corvese and honorable members of the House Committee on Labor:

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 7968**. 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 encompasses all aspects of a person’s life, including those that may affect their economic stability. Paid family leave – and the ability to care for one’s family in times of need – is a critical component of this freedom, and all people deserve the economic security to care for themselves and their families with dignity. Planned Parenthood knows, and our patients know, the juggling that Rhode Island residents must do every month to pay bills, care for their families, and meet their basic needs.

Paid leave is essential for working people, families, and businesses, and this legislation builds upon the previous success of this program to further expand and strengthen its provisions. When paid leave is strong, health outcomes are improved, and working people remain economically secure and connected to their jobs in times of need.

H 7968 brings our state law in alignment with other state’s paid family leave laws to codify a more inclusive definition of family, making this definition more fully inclusive of blended families, single-parent families, LGBTQ+ families, chosen families, and multigenerational families. Including “care recipients and grandchildren under the purview of this legislation

ensures that no one is excluded from the fundamental rights this bill provides – especially for households where a grandparent may be the primary caregiver, or, in communities such as the LGBTQ+ community, where care givers may be a part of a person’s chosen family. As the state with the shortest paid family leave requirements in the nation, this bill modernizes and updates our laws to reflect the tangible needs of the diverse family structures in our state. We are also highly supportive of the expansion of paid family leave benefits from 8 to 12 weeks, which critically provides more flexibility to family and caregiving needs. This reflects the recommendations of national medical associations – including the American Medical Association – which urge that parental leave terms provide at least 12 weeks to ensure parental bonding with newborns and recovery from birth, uplifting critical reproductive freedom and maternal health policies.

In line with PPSNE’s dedication to fighting for policies that comprehensively protect the lives of all Rhode Islanders as a way of ensuring that our patients, and our communities, have the resources they need to live healthy, safe, and self-determined lives, we urge support for H 7968.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

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

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