

Testimony in SUPPORT of H7277

Rhode Island House Health & Human Services Committee, Tuesday February 3, 2026

To the House Health & Human Services Committee

My name is Preetilata Hashemi and I live in Providence, Rhode Island. I stand in strong support of House Bill 7277. This bill ensures that families have access to breastfeeding and lactation support by expanding insurance coverage to certified lactation counselors.

I am a community-based doula and certified lactation counselor in Providence. I serve Black and Brown families through the perinatal period, to make sure they are informed, supported, and have access to the resources they need. Most of the work I've done for my community has been unpaid.

Breastfeeding or chestfeeding has significant benefits for the long term health of babies and birthing people. For children, breastfeeding has been shown to reduce rates of asthma, obesity, and type 1 diabetes. For childbearing people, breastfeeding significantly reduces risk for postpartum depression, type 2 diabetes, stroke and hypertension. Unfortunately, our state has some of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the country. According to the CDC, RI ranks 39th and 37th in the US and last place in New England for exclusive breastfeeding rates at 6 and 12 months.

Supporting lactation counselors is an investment in the long term health of RI families. Currently, certified lactation counselors are not covered by insurance in RI. This means that **families are not receiving critical support.**

In closing, I urge you to support H7277.

Sincerely,

Preetilata Hashemi