

Dear Chair Donovan and distinguished members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Rev. DL Helfer, LICSW. I am a homeowner and resident of Providence. I am a transgender male who also provides therapy to the LGBTQ+ community, many of whom will be affected by the outcome of this bill.

I am testifying in strong support of House Bill 8245 (Rep. Donovan). This bill will require 12-month supply coverage of hormone therapy at one time to ensure continuity in access and eliminate gaps in hormone use. No one should struggle to access the medication they rely on, including hormone therapy. Yet, insurance often limits the supply of hormone therapy a person may obtain at one time.

At a time when access is becoming more limited in other states, people are fleeing to RI to live in order to obtain gender affirming care. At a time, too, when access to insurance is ever-more-expensive and out of reach for many, a one-time 12-month supply would be a life-changing option. Third, and a real and appropriate fear for many in this community, we know federal access to gender affirming care will increasingly get legislated against for adults, the way it was already – so harmfully – attempted to do for minors. A 12-month supply gives us some possibility of waiting out the cruelty of this Administration with enough gender-affirming care to survive. Even I, as a 58-year old trans man, with a good life, will own readily that a lack of access to this care, would quickly and dramatically change my life for the worse. This bill is incredibly important.

I have many clients who, even in the current environment, experience gaps in care because of refilling these prescriptions. A lack of transportation to pick up the prescription or an overburdened provider who hasn't refilled the prescription or a pharmacy experiencing gaps in availability (like everything else, because of tariffs and wars) all can lead to gaps in care. Gaps in treatment have both emotional and physical impacts. This bill is especially important for Rhode Islanders that live in rural areas, low-income individuals, or those with disabilities.

H8245 does not change the medical standard of care. It simply allows providers to prescribe what is best for their patients and ensures stable access to hormone therapy medication for those that rely on it. No person should have to ration their prescribed medication or experience adverse health effects because they can't get consistent access to their hormone therapy.

I ask this state to continue to support the fundamental rights of LGBTQ+ individuals to make decisions for their own bodies, in collaboration with their providers. This bill would do just that. I urge the committee and legislature to vote in support of H8245. Thank you for your care..

Gratefully,
DL Helfer