



Defending Democracy. Empowering Voters.

Written Testimony Submitted in Support of H8203, H7272, and H7322

Chair Donovan and Members of the Committee:

The League of Women Voters of RI (LWVRI)¹ and Newport County submit this testimony in support of three measures scheduled for consideration by the Committee on Thursday, April 9, 2026: H8203, H7272, and H7322.

The LWVRI is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering voters and defending democracy. That mission includes advocating for equitable access to essential services and ensuring that decisions affecting the public are made transparently and with accountability.

At its core, this legislation is about three things: access, equity, and accountability.

First—access.

Maternal health care is essential. Community-based birthing centers expand options for families and provide patient-centered care at a critical moment in people’s lives. When services like these become unstable or uncertain, families are left without clarity or confidence about where they can turn for care.

Second—equity.

We know that maternal health outcomes are not experienced equally. Persistent disparities—particularly for Black women—highlight the importance of maintaining care models that are accessible, community-based, and responsive to patient needs. When access points are reduced, those inequities are more likely to grow, not shrink.

Third—accountability.

Decisions about essential healthcare services must be made openly. They should be grounded in data, guided by clear standards, and subject to public understanding and input. When those elements are missing, public trust is weakened.

The House bills—H8203, H7272, and H7322—work together to address this. They establish a clear framework requiring advance notice, meaningful financial transparency, and a public, evidence-based review process before significant changes to birthing services can occur.

These are not barriers to decision-making. They are safeguards to ensure that decisions are thoughtful, transparent, and centered on the real impact on patients, families, and communities.

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From the League's perspective, this is about good governance. Whether we are talking about voting rights or healthcare access, the principle is the same: decisions that affect people's lives must be made openly and with public accountability.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to support these bills.

Because when access to essential care depends on opaque decisions and uncertain commitments, it is not just healthcare that is weakened—it is public trust. And without trust, neither our healthcare system nor our democracy can function as they should.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Gene Thompson-Grove
President, League of Women Voters of RI
Board Member, League of Women Voters Newport County

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