

Chair DiPalma and members of the Senate Committee on Finance

I'm John McDaid from Portsmouth, and I am a member of RI Atheists, one of the 27 member organizations of the Rhode Island Coalition for Reproductive Freedom. I submit testimony in strong support of the proposed \$600,000 allocation for Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (PPSNE) contained in the FY 2027 budget (H 7127).

This issue is personal: many of my close friends have depended on Planned Parenthood. In our twenties, before we had the kind of jobs that include health benefits, Planned Parenthood was the only place my friends could afford to get basic reproductive care. That is not a distant memory — that's reality for a big chunk of Rhode Island's population. Consider everyone who's working part-time, trapped in the gig economy, or just getting by on minimum wage. For them, PPSNE is not a last resort; it is their primary care provider for sexual and reproductive health.

Last year's Federal law stripped PPSNE of Medicaid reimbursements for preventive services — not because of any issues with care, but as a punitive measure for also providing abortion. The thinking of this Administration seems to be "make the provision of abortion politically costly enough, and you can defund all affordable reproductive health care along with it." But the nearly 10,000 patients PPSNE served in Rhode Island last year did not just come for abortions. They came for cancer screenings, STI treatment, and contraception. This is basic health care, and we can't let ideology take that from our neighbors.

This \$600,000 allocation does not expand a program. It maintains one. It backfills a gap created entirely by federal overreach, allowing PPSNE to continue providing the care that it has been delivering — care that patients have been receiving, and that PPSNE has been absorbing at significant cost since the defunding took place.

At this moment in history, all of our state legislators should be laser-focused on protecting Rhode Islanders from the actions of the Federal government. Our neighbors should not become pawns in Washington's culture wars.

I urge the committee to support this allocation and help keep PPSNE's critical services accessible for the Rhode Islanders who need it most.

Thank you for your consideration, and all you do for our state.

John McDaid
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