



Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

Testimony in Support of 26-S 2255
AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT –
RHODE ISLAND INDIVIDUAL MARKET AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 2026
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
Hannah Stern – Director, Public Policy and Government Relations
May 5, 2026

Dear Chair Murray and honorable members of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services:

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 strong support of Senate Bill S 2255**. 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.

One of the more immediate and acutely paramount issues for this legislature to address is the health care affordability crisis for Rhode Islanders. With unrelenting federal attacks on providers, including Planned Parenthood through a defund provision in H.R. 1 that blocks Planned Parenthood from submitting for reimbursement of preventive services to federal Medicaid, leaving the 24% of PPSNE patients in Rhode Island that are insured under Medicaid vulnerable; federal cuts to Medicaid that will leave tens of thousands of Rhode Islanders without health insurance coverage; and the failure to renew ACA enhanced premium tax credits for health insurance, the state of health care affordability has perhaps never been more precarious and tenuous.

S 2255 aims to address two major issues by establishing a state program to reduce out-of-pocket costs for health insurance – both mitigating the number of Rhode Islanders who may forgo health insurance coverage entirely because of the rising costs of that coverage, and ensuring that those who continue to maintain health insurance coverage are not forced to sacrifice other necessary living expenses to meet exorbitant and unsustainable health insurance rates. This legislation is a pragmatic solution to ensure that patients can still access health insurance coverage and receive the care that they need – including

preventive services such as sexual and reproductive health care. When patients are financially excluded from coverage, they may delay care for both important medical concerns and routine examinations, which can then manifest into acute problems that place greater financial burdens on both patients and our health care infrastructure. And, as a safety net provider that sees patients regardless of their ability to pay or their insurance status, we know patients impacted by federal action and inaction are those same patients that both rely on PPSNE and already face systemic barriers to health care access and coverage – including, and especially, affordability of this coverage.

As this committee is aware, the burden of health care prices is an ever-expanding crisis. In the past 12 months, 3 in 10 U.S. adults stated that they or a household family member had difficulty paying for their health care costs, and 36% of adults said that they skipped or postponed necessary health care because of the cost.¹ At the same time, 75% of uninsured adults under the age of 65 relayed that they *skipped needed care because of the cost of that care*.²

We know - through the experience of our patients - the juggling that families must do to ensure they have money for bills, food, shelter, and other necessities along with health care services. We also know that when health insurance costs are high, the need for care does not disappear or diminish, and that delays in especially preventive care increase health care costs and create worse long-term health outcomes for both individuals and communities. State investment to address the gaps in health insurance coverage is good public health policy, good economic policy, and ensures that our state is not forced to remediate an even worse crisis in the future.

Preventive services, including sexual and reproductive health care, are fundamental pillars of comprehensive health care access, and PPSNE is committed to fighting for policies which ensure the ability of Rhode Islanders to live self-determined lives that permit them the dignity and autonomy to seek and receive the health care they need when they need it. For these reasons, we urge support for S 2255, which is a practical, solutions-based proposal to a profound and serious health care affordability crisis. We strongly urge the passage of this necessary legislation.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

¹ <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/americans-challenges-with-health-care-costs/>

² *Id.*

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'H Stern'.

Hannah Stern
Director, Public Policy and Government Relations
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
hannah.stern@ppsne.org