



Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

**Testimony in Support of 26-S 2689,
AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -
OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services
Hannah Stern - Director, Public Policy and Government Relations
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
March 12, 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 support of Senate Bill 2689**. 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.

PPSNE is proud to advocate for a comprehensive understanding of the social determinants of health, especially because they are similarly and intrinsically factors of achieving true reproductive freedom. These factors include economic stability; access to health care; social and community context; access to education; and the neighborhood environment of a community. This legislation would ensure a collaborative model across governmental bodies that supports the continuation and expansion of Rhode Island's Health Equity Zone program, and incorporates community insight and participation into this critical effort.

As proponents of reproductive freedom, we know that a person's ability to fully effectuate their own reproductive freedom depends on an infinite list of factors – however, addressing core issues, including, but not limited to, elements such as the physical ability to receive health care; a person's safety in accessing health care; financial ability to provide copay payments, medical bills, or afford taking time off work to attend an appointment; language or literacy barriers in seeking and navigating health care access; and more, ensures

expanded opportunities to address the intertwining concerns that collectively impact health equity.

In line with PPSNE's dedication to fighting for policies that comprehensively protect the lives of all Rhode Islanders as a way of ensuring that our patients, and our communities, have the resources they need to live healthy, safe, and self-determined lives, we urge support for this important piece of legislation which seeks to comprehensively unify our state's work on health care access with tangible community needs.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

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

Hannah Stern
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