



**Lifespan**

*Delivering health with care.™*

**Department of Lifespan  
Administration**

167 Point Street  
Coro East, Suite 2B  
Providence, RI 02903

Tel: 401 444-7284  
Fax: 401 444-9917  
Email: [BKhokhar@lifespan.org](mailto:BKhokhar@lifespan.org)

**Babar Khokhar, MD, MBA**  
*Executive Vice President  
Chief Physician Officer*

February 15, 2024

House Committee on Judiciary  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

***Re: Lifespan Physician Support of House Bill 7169***

Dear Chairman Craven and Honorable Committee Members:

We write in support of House Bill 7169.

As physicians, we have devoted our careers to helping and healing. Effective communication with our patients is a cornerstone of our profession.

Unanticipated outcomes will always occur in the practice of medicine. When they do, patients and their families may feel fear, grief, confusion, or anger. They turn to their doctors for answers – about what happened, and what will happen next. In these difficult moments, patients need their doctors to speak freely, and to tell their patients truthfully what occurred, how, and why. Without a law like H7169, physicians in Rhode Island must tread carefully in those challenging conversations because what they are saying and how they are saying it may someday be used against them in an effort to prove negligence in a medical malpractice lawsuit.

The physician-patient relationship is built on trust. The types of communications protected by H7169 are critical elements of ordinary human interactions that foster trust and ensure a continued physician-patient relationship, even beyond unanticipated outcomes, so that our patients continue to receive the care that they need to recover from such an outcome.

Physicians must be permitted to speak openly and honestly with patients after an unanticipated outcome. Sadly, the threat of costly medical malpractice lawsuits and potential licensure actions looms large on the minds of doctors, discouraging the very communications that might mitigate a patient's anxiety and distress and foster a better outcome for both the patient and the physician.

H7169 appropriately prioritizes patient care over defensive medicine. This bill encourages better bedside manner and enables physicians to connect with their patients as people by giving physicians the opportunity to focus on patient care rather than their fear of liability.

We thank Chairman Craven and Representatives Caldwell, Shanley, and O'Brien for their leadership on this important issue and fully support H7169.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Babar Khokhar". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Babar Khokhar, MD, MBA  
Executive Vice President  
Chief Physician Officer