

**Chair Robert Craven
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives**

March 5, 2024

Re: Testimony in Support of H577, The Health Care Provider Shield Bill

Dear Chairperson Craven and members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am DL Helfer, a licensed social worker here in Rhode Island.

I support Bill H7577 both personally and professionally. I'm going to speak to you and share my own story because it's one I CAN share. I can't share stories of my patients or clients, but I can tell you there are parallels.

I'm here before you, a 56-year-old trans male. I know personally what it means to benefit from transgender healthcare. I know that so many states and locales are removing that right to live into our true selves, and I know that Rhode Island has instead been steadfast in continuing to make this care not only available but largely covered by insurance. I can't say how much that benefits myself and others.

This bill is an extension of your care for those in your community who need this care.

Of all the things I've had to worry about as a trans person – would I experience violence? Could I get healthcare without discrimination? Would I experience loss of a job or housing due to my gender identity – the one thing that I – and others – haven't had to worry about is whether our providers would get sued for providing care to us.

You and I both know that the laws in other states against providing transgender healthcare is meant to have a chilling effect. It is meant to drive caring providers away from this work and clients away from receiving care. We must not allow that to happen.

This shield bill will do just that. It will allow providers such as myself to provide good care, without concern for legal retribution for providing that care. Most importantly, this bill will allow patients to continue receive necessary healthcare in these uncertain times.

I urge you to vote in favor of H7577.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak [in favor of/against] bill [Number]. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

DL Helfer, LCSW

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