



RHODE ISLAND MEDICAL SOCIETY

Chairperson Robert Craven
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

H 7577

March 5, 2024

SUPPORT

Dear Chair Craven:

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Providence, RI 02903

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Dear Chairperson Craven:

Thank you for opportunity to provide testimony. As the President of the Rhode Island Medical Society and an OBGYN who lives and practices here in Rhode Island, I speak in strong support of this essential legislation H7577, the Health Care Provider Shield Bill.

The Rhode Island Medical Society is the eighth oldest medical society in the United States. We support and advocate for all Rhode Island physicians in their efforts to provide the best possible care to our patients. It is indeed our mission to promote equitable healthcare and to demonstrate compassionate and ethical behavior. Yet, hostile laws passed in other states have the potential to interfere with the delivery of healthcare here in Rhode Island.

Today, more than 20 states have banned essential medical care for transgender people or some or all of abortion care. These bans exert extraordinary control over people's lives and impose civil and criminal penalties on clinicians for practicing medicine according to professional standards of care. We want to be able to continue to provide such health care for our patients, but we are worried that these out-of-state laws could make it hard for us to do so. This bill is critical to our maintaining access to evidence-based medicine and protecting our clinicians and other healthcare workers who provide this patient-centered, legal medical care.

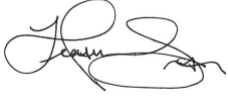
This straightforward bill will protect patients' personal medical information from being shared with law enforcement in other states and protect clinicians from surveillance that could hurt their ability to provide legally protected care.

Rhode Island must remain a state where one wants to practice so that physicians and other expert health professionals can continue to provide patients with high quality and compassionate care when they need it. At a time when the healthcare workforce is being hit from multiple angles, we must shore up our ranks and retain the very best that we have today. Every physician, midwife, social worker, and other healthcare worker must have the safety of mindset that we won't be unjustly penalized with criminal or civil litigation from outside Rhode Island simply for practicing legal, established medical care in line with professional standards and best-practice medical guidelines.

Here in Rhode Island, we value access to health care for all, and support medical providers in delivering the highest quality care. We must act now to protect our healthcare system, our providers, and those who need essential medical care from such outside interference. H7577, the Health Care Provider Shield Act will do just that. This bill helps to ensure that healthcare providers in Rhode Island can continue offering essential care to ensure that people can build the lives and healthy futures they want.

We are grateful for the support the legislature has shown the provider community in the past and respectfully request your continued support through passage of House Bill 7577.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heather Smith", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Heather Smith, MD, MPH
President