



March 5, 2024

The Honorable Robert Craven
Chairperson, House Judiciary Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairperson Craven:

Thundermist Health Center and our team of health care professionals write in strong support of The Health Care Provider Shield Bill (H 7577). This legislation will protect legal, standard-of-care transgender and reproductive medical care for patients and providers in Rhode Island.

Thundermist Health Center cares for more than 62,000 Rhode Islanders or one out of every 18 people in the Ocean State. More than 900 health care professionals work at Thundermist. Multi-disciplinary care teams provide medical, dental, and behavioral health care and social services.

For more than 55 years, our mission has been to remove barriers to quality, affordable health care. Thundermist began in 1969 in a public housing complex providing reproductive health care and has expanded to be one of the largest providers of primary care in Rhode Island. This bill is critical to ensure primary care remains accessible to everybody in Rhode Island.

In 2015, we recognized people who are trans, nonbinary, and/or gender diverse had nowhere to turn for safe, high-quality, affirming health care. Guided by our mission, we established the Trans Health Access Team. Nearly 10 years later, the Trans Health Access Team has grown to care for more than 2,100 patients making Thundermist the second largest provider of gender affirming care in New England and largest in Rhode Island.

We call on the committee to act now to protect Rhode Island's health care system and those seeking essential medical care in our state.

The current standards of practice for gender affirming care and reproductive care are based in robust medical evidence. Yet, more than 20 U.S. states have

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ignored medical evidence and best practice to ban essential medical care for transgender people. Just as many states have banned some reproductive health care services. These bans are dangerous and exert extraordinary control over people's lives and impose civil and criminal penalties on providers for practicing medicine in line with professional standards of care. Now, we have seen overreaching attempts to use these harmful laws against health care systems and providers in other states where this necessary health care is legal and accessible.

That's not the Rhode Island way. As Rhode Island health care professionals, we respectfully request passage of H 7577.

Sincerely,

Jeanne LaChance
President/CEO

The following 150 Thundermist Health Center employees also sign-on to this letter:

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