



To: House Committee on Judiciary
From: Karen Malcolm, Protect Our Healthcare Coalition
Date: March 5, 2024
Re: **SUPPORT H7577** – Legislation to enact a state shield law to protect access to providers of gender-affirming and abortion care.

The Protect Our HealthCare Coalition is a group of leading Rhode Island non-profits and consumer groups with a goal to protect, improve, and expand equitable access to quality, person-centered, affordable health care for all. The Coalition strongly **supports House Bill 7577**, the Healthcare Provider Shield Bill, and thanks Representative Edwards and co-sponsors for bringing it forward.

This legislation is not just important; it is critical. Without it, access to essential care for Rhode Islanders is at risk. The bill is designed to protect established, best-practice medical care legal in Rhode Island and ensure that our local providers and health care infrastructure are not negatively impacted by hostile laws in other states.

This protection is urgently needed as bans on gender-affirming care and abortion evolve in scope. More than 20 states have enacted bans on established medical care that exert extraordinary control over people’s lives and even impose civil and criminal penalties on providers for practicing medicine in line with the professional standards of care. **These bans have the potential to cross state lines and impact providers here.**

Bodily autonomy is a basic right, and patients and providers should be protected to confidently pursue legal care following clinical best practices. This legislation will protect providers and their patients and help ensure the viability of our state’s health delivery system. We urge your support.

Thank you.

Protect Our Healthcare Coalition allies & partners: Economic Progress Institute, Mental Health Association RI, RI NOW, RI Parent Information Network, RI Health Center Association, United Way of Rhode Island, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, SEIU Rhode Island Council, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, Leukemia/Lymphoma Society, Foster Forward, RI Coalition for the Homeless, Rhode Island Working Families Party, Mental Health Recovery Coalition, Oasis Wellness & Recovery Center, RI Community Food Bank, Substance Use & Mental Health Leadership Council, The Womxn Project, Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, HousingWorks RI, Rhode Island Organizing Project (RIOP), Thundermist Health Center, National Association of Social Workers RI Chapter, Advocates for Better Care

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