



March 5, 2024

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

Dear Chairperson Craven:

Women's Fund of Rhode Island, whose mission is to invest in women and girls to achieve gender equity through systemic change, strongly supports H7577, the Health Care Provider Shield Bill. Our organization stands with our health care providers and their patients.

The ability to choose how and when to start our families, as well as any procedures we want/need to put our bodies through to achieve health, is critical to closing the gender health, wage, and wealth gaps. According to the Global Gender Gap Index, the U.S. ranks 78th out of 146 developed countries for women's health, particularly as it relates to reproductive health. Locally, we already face a shortfall of doctors due to a variety of issues related to burn-out, college debt, low medicaid reimbursement and retirements.

This legislation is about Rhode Island's ability to protect health care providers, ensuring we don't lose more trained providers to the battle over reproductive health care in other states. The bill protects established, best-practice medical care that is legal in Rhode Island and ensures our local providers and health care infrastructure aren't negatively impacted by hostile laws in other states. Ultimately, this also protects patients and health care.

More than 20 states have enacted bans on essential, established medical care which 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.** This legislation will protect providers, their patients, and ensure the viability of the health delivery system.

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 this vital

legislation. Please contact me at [your contact] if I can provide any additional information or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Nevins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline.

Kelly Nevins
Chief Executive Officer