

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND



Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

14 Harrington Road

Cranston, RI 02920-3080

TEL: (401) 462-3201

FAX: (401) 462-3204

TDD: (401) 462-6087

March 5, 2024

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr., Chair
House Committee on Judiciary
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: 2024 – H 7577 – An Act Relating to Health and Safety-Health Care Provider Shield Bill

Dear Chair Craven:

Please accept this letter of support for **H 7577** that enacts the Health Care Provider Shield Bill, precluding any individual from interfering with another's access to transgender health care services and reproductive health care services.

The Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) recognizes that within the transgender population there is higher prevalence of depression, anxiety and thoughts of suicide than in the general population; consequently, access to transgender health care services is imperative.

A recent study revealed that “81% of transgender adults in the U.S. have thought about suicide, 42% of transgender adults have attempted it, and 56% have engaged in non-suicidal self-injury over their lifetimes.” (Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, press release, July 20, 2023). Additional results as noted in the Williams Institute study press release:

- “Using data from the U.S. Transgender Population Health Survey (TransPop), researchers examined the prevalence of hazardous drinking, problematic drug use, serious psychological distress, suicidality, and non-suicidal self-injury between transgender and cisgender adults. Results from this study, which is the first national probability sample of transgender people in the U.S., support previously reported findings that showed significant disparities in health outcomes for transgender as compared with cisgender Americans.”
- “Notably, transgender nonbinary adults reported higher rates of harmful substance use and poor mental health than transgender men and women.”
- “‘The rates of suicidal ideation and self-injury among transgender people are alarming—particularly for transgender nonbinary adults,’ said study author Ilan H. Meyer, Distinguished Senior Scholar of Public Policy at the Williams Institute. ‘A lack of societal recognition and acceptance of gender identities outside of the binary of cisgender man or woman and increasing

politically motivated attacks on transgender individuals, increase stigma and prejudice and related exposure to minority stress, which contributes to the high rates of substance use and suicidality we see among transgender people.””

The Williams study echoes previous findings of increased mental health disorders among the transgender population.

Consistent with the mission of BHDDH, to ensure equitable access to health care services for all Rhode Islanders, and in particular to vulnerable populations, we support the goal of H 7577 to ensure access to transgender healthcare services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louis A. Cerbo".

Louis A. Cerbo, Ed.D.
Interim Director

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Judiciary
The Honorable John G. Edwards
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy