

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

March 5, 2024

Dear Chairperson Craven:

I am writing in strong support of H7577, the Health Care Provider Shield Bill. I am a psychiatry resident in my final year of training. This legislation is very important to me and my health care colleagues, and the patients we serve.

This legislation is about Rhode Island's ability to protect health care providers, patients and access to essential care. 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.

This legislation is necessary because these laws have the potential to interfere with delivery of health care in Rhode Island and create a chilling effect for providers like me.

I want to practice in a state that protects me and my patients, and so do other providers. In order for Rhode Island to ensure the viability of our health delivery system it is imperative that Rhode Island remains a competitive practice environment. This common-sense legislation brings Rhode Island in line with 11 states, including neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut.

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.**

I particularly want to add that I routinely care for individuals who are from a diversity of backgrounds, and identify across a wide spectrum of sexual and gender identities. In my role, particularly as I transition to the correctional setting, where I intend to spend my career, legislation and the political sphere can have significant, life-altering implications for the way that we care for these patients,

and without the appropriate support and ability to work towards an individual's whole health under the law, outcomes are drastically altered. I also want to add that my support of this bill is not only important to me because of the people I work with in my professional life. I have family members who identify as transgendered, and their health and well-being has benefited immensely from the current freedoms that healthcare providers in Rhode Island and Massachusetts have in their ability to practice under nationally and internationally accepted standards for the care and affirmation of transgendered persons. I am deeply concerned that this may change for the worse, and have a great deal of apprehension for the safety and well-being of my patients and my family should that happen.

I appreciate the support the legislature has shown the provider community in the past, and respectfully request your continued support through passage of this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

Micah Duggins-Warf, MD
4th year Psychiatry Resident