

February 29, 2024

Re: **In Support of H7577** – An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Health Care Provider Shield Bill

Dear Chairman Craven Sr., Vice Chairs Hagan McEntee, and Knight, and esteemed members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I extend my gratitude for the chance to express our support for H7577 and especially thank Rep. Edwards and co-sponsors for introducing this bill, which aims to prevent any person from obstructing another's ability to obtain transgender health care services and reproductive health care services.

The Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families (RICCF), representing 43 member organizations, advocates for family strengthening, support resources, and comprehensive child and family services, including behavioral health, special education, juvenile justice, domestic violence, sexual assault, and healthcare services.

Many transgender individuals face significant challenges when seeking health care services, often compounded by rejection or a lack of understanding from their families and communities. This lack of support can lead to isolation, depression, and anxiety, making it more difficult for transgender individuals to prioritize their health needs.

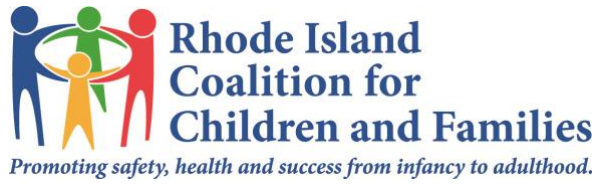
In the absence of a supportive environment, transgender individuals may navigate the healthcare system alone, encountering potential discrimination and stigma. This situation can result in delays in seeking care, avoiding necessary treatments, or forgoing health care altogether. A report by the Williams Institute highlights that “more than half (50.4%) of transgender youth (ages 13-17) have lost or are at risk of losing access to age-appropriate, medically necessary gender-affirming care in their state – care which is, in many cases, lifesaving.”¹

Communities and families must provide the necessary support and understanding for transgender individuals seeking health care. By fostering an environment of acceptance and inclusivity, we can help ensure that all individuals, regardless of gender identity, can access the care they need for healthy and fulfilling lives.

Thank you for your consideration, and we urge your support of H7577.

Sincerely,

¹ <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Trans-Pop-Update-Jun-2022.pdf>



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A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Tanja Kubas-Meyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Tanja Kubas-Meyer
Executive Director