



June 10th, 2024

House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Bella Robinson. I am the executive Director of COYOTE RI. We are writing in strong support of H7577.

H7577- Health Care Provider Shield Law is extremely necessary to protect Rhode Island's health care system, doctors and other medical care providers, and patients from hostile out-of-state laws that could negatively impact delivery of care in the Ocean State.

The Health Care Provider Shield Act is about protecting established, best-practice medical care that is legal in Rhode Island and ensuring that our local providers and our health care infrastructure aren't negatively impacted by hostile laws in other states. Politicians in multiple U.S. states are engaging in alarming government overreach, banning access to essential medical care and instituting civil and criminal penalties on providers for practicing medicine in line with the professional standards of care. This bill will ensure that these out-of-state laws aren't used against health care providers in Rhode Island."

Decisions about essential health care should be made by patients, their families, and their trusted care providers, not politicians. It is critical that Rhode Island take steps to protect access to legal, standard-of-care health care for all who need it, along with the providers who deliver that care "The Health Care Provider Shield Act will ensure that Rhode Island providers can continue to deliver high quality, medically necessary care to their patients."

"Family doctors, OBGYNs, and other practitioners want to be able to deliver high quality, essential care for our patients. Here in Rhode Island, we are able to provide the care that Rhode Islanders need, including full-spectrum reproductive services and gender-affirming health care. This bill will protect our providers against actions from other states and allow us to continue to deliver the standard of care and excellence that our patients deserve." said Dr. Heather A Smith, RI Medical Society President and OBGYN. "We need the Health Care Provider Shield Act to ensure Rhode Island remains a state where clinicians want to practice, and so that physicians can continue to provide our patients with quality, compassionate, and essential care when they need it."

The bill is supported by state health care associations and providers including the Rhode Island Medical Society, Rhode Island Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Rhode Island Health Center Association, Open Door Health, Thundermist Health Center, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Inc., RI National Association of Social Workers, and the Rhode Island Public Health Institute.

The Health Care Provider Shield Act will:

- Protect Rhode Island healthcare providers from abusive civil or criminal litigation from other states
- Protect Rhode Islanders from having their information about protected health care shared with law enforcement agencies in other states where such care is banned
- Ensure Rhode Island providers aren't unfairly penalized by health care institutions or insurance for providing legally protected health care consistent with the professional standards of care
- Protect health care providers from surveillance that could negatively impact their ability to provide legally protected care
- Protect all providers involved in delivering legally protected transgender and reproductive healthcare in Rhode Island consistent with the professional standards of care, including care via telehealth
- Ensure Rhode Island's resources are not used to further hostile litigation from states where essential healthcare is banned

"The Health Care Provider Shield Act provides critically needed safeguards for Rhode Island's health care system," said Polly Crozier, Attorney at GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders. "Rhode Island has a strong public policy commitment to protecting access to health care, including reproductive and transgender health care. The bill protects Rhode Island providers and patients from unwarranted out-of-state intrusion into medical decision making and ensures clinicians can continue to practice in line with the professional standards of care."

"Penalizing providers for delivering effective, best-practice medical care hurts patients and providers, and takes away people's ability to make informed decisions about their own and their children and families' health," said Jeanne LaChance, President/CEO, Thundermist Health Center. "Rhode Island has a long history of supporting transgender people's freedom to live without discrimination, including in access to health care. We appreciate Sen. Euer and, Rep. Edwards' introduction of the Health Care Provider Shield Act to make it clear that access to essential medical care for transgender people as well as reproductive health care are legal rights in Rhode Island, and to protect Rhode Island's health care system, providers, and those seeking essential medical care."

"As more states across the country move to ban abortion and transgender health care, there is no doubt that patients and health care professionals are subject to increased health and legal risks when getting and providing health care. The introduction of the Health Care Provider Shield Act makes it clear that our state leaders are prioritizing patient access to legal, standard-of-care transgender and reproductive medical care and protecting those who provide this essential health care," said Vimala Phongsavanh, Senior Director, External Affairs for Planned Parenthood of Southern New England. "We look forward to working with Senator Euer and Representative Edwards to pass this critical legislation to protect essential health care for all Rhode Islanders."

The Health Care Provider Shield Act is also supported by a coalition of organizations including the ACLU of Rhode Island, COYOTE RI, Center for Reproductive Rights, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), RI

Coalition for Reproductive Freedom, Protect our Health Care RI, TGI Network of Rhode Island, the Womxn Project, and Youth Pride.

Please vote yes on H7577

Thank you for your time and consideration

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Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, Rhode Island (COYOTE RI) is a group of current and former sex workers and sex trafficking survivors working on "policy" for improved health and safety for people in Rhode Island's sex industry. Learn more at www.coyoteri.org