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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF 24-H 7577, AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY – HEALTH CARE PROVIDER SHIELD BILL March 5, 2024

In line with the principle that medical decisions deserve and necessitate being made between a patient and their physician without the unnecessary and inappropriate interference of the government, we are strongly supportive of this legislation which would ensure protections for patients and providers of reproductive and gender-affirming health care services.

Since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, the codification of protections for integral health services has only been more pressing. Rhode Island has already taken significant steps to ensure that individuals in our state have a statutory right to access healthcare like abortion services, and we have additionally validated the importance of continued access to gender-affirming healthcare. This legislation is a logical next step to guarantee that those who seek out these services and those doctors who provide the services are legally protected in their professional practice. It is also a step that a number of other states have quickly taken in recognition of the dangers facing healthcare providers even in states that legally protect these medical services.

The sheer speed at which we have seen states across the country seek to outlaw and restrict access to these healthcare services should serve alone as an example of how swiftly we should act to enact this important and protective bill. Because we believe it is important to ensure that Rhode Island remain an environment to receive safe, accessible, and legal healthcare services – and an environment for professionals to provide these healthcare services – we urge passage of this legislation. Thank you for your consideration.