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ACLU OF RI POSITION: OPPOSE

**TESTIMONY ON 24-H 7884,
AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY – RHODE ISLAND’S CHILDREN
DESERVE HELP NOT HARM ACT – MINOR’S GENDER TRANSITION
April 9, 2024**

The ACLU of Rhode Island opposes this legislation which attempts to place inappropriate statutory restrictions on medical processes which should be left in the hands of a minor, their parents or guardians, and their physician, not the government. Instead, this bill aims to strip transgender and gender nonconforming minors of their and their family’s autonomy, while seeking to punish physicians providing appropriate healthcare to their patients.

Bills such as this one purport to protect minors from certain types of medical treatment, but universally denying medical treatment – especially if the patient, the family and the patient’s medical provider believe this treatment to be critical to a person’s health – only harms youth and serves to stigmatize the experience of minors who are transgender or gender nonconforming.

Access to gender-affirming healthcare has been shown to reduce both moderate to severe depression and lower the prospect of self-harm or suicidal thoughts. To explicitly deny minors this healthcare in a supportive and medically safe environment would induce unnecessary suffering and is incompatible with best medical practices.

For these reasons, we urge that this bill be rejected. Thank you for your consideration.