

January 29, 2019

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Chairman
House of Representatives Committee on Judiciary
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Reproductive Healthcare Legislation

Dear Chairman Craven:

I am writing to express my support in principle for both HB 5125, The Reproductive Privacy Act and HB 5127, The Reproductive Health Care Act. Though different in certain respects, at bottom, both bills would codify the important reproductive health care freedoms established by the United States Supreme Court in Roe v. Wade 410 U.S. 113 (1973), and its progeny.

Additionally, I write to oppose HB 5114, HB 5198, and HR 5199.

Reproductive health care freedom is currently in jeopardy. There are efforts in many parts of the country that seek to create statutory and/or regulatory measures that may cause the Supreme Court to re-examine and ultimately limit and/or invalidate the key reproductive health care freedoms established by Roe. If these efforts are successful, and Roe and its progeny are overturned, Rhode Island law would return to its pre-Roe state, and in that state would significantly and negatively limit reproductive freedom. For example, a Rhode Island statutory provision, invalidated by Roe, makes it a felony for a doctor to perform an abortion, with a penalty of up to seven (7) years in prison. Another provision mandates spousal notice of a woman's consent to an abortion prior to its performance. These statutory provisions, and others, would become current law in Rhode Island if Roe was overturned.

Reproductive health care freedom must be preserved. Rhode Island cannot return to the days of illegal and unsafe abortions that put the lives of women in danger and create criminal liability for physicians. It is vital that we take a proactive approach on this front.

I look forward to working on this legislation with the General Assembly, the sponsors of both HB 5125 and HB 5127, and stakeholders to ensure that we ensure reproductive health care freedom in Rhode Island.

I would like to thank you and the Committee for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Peter F. Neronha
Attorney General

CC: House of Representatives Committee on Judiciary