



National Association of Social Workers

220 West Exchange Street, Suite 007
Providence, Rhode Island 02903
Telephone: 401-274-4940
Facsimile: 401-274-4941
www.rinasw.info
rhodeislandnasw@gmail.com

DATE: March 11, 2014
TO: House Committee on Judiciary
RE: **In Support of H-7890, H-7222, H-7223, H-7472, H-7779, H-7837 & H-7853**
In Opposition of H-7303, H-7330, H-7383, H7403 & H-7854

This testimony is highlighting only one of the many bills being heard tonight. The overall grounds for support or opposition relates to our positions based on our values and beliefs related to a woman's right to make reproductive health decisions without interference from others and our position on women's healthcare access disparities related to lack of financial ability to pay. For purposes of brevity in respect to the Committee's time and in respect for the numerous other testifiers tonight, we have stated our position in terms of support or opposition to each of the pieces of legislation slated on the docket. (See above.) We are providing a short testimony on one bill H-7890 rather than on all to maintain this brevity. This does not mean we are more or less interested in any of the other proposed legislation. Following the H-7890 is a relevant section relating to all bills being heard tonight from the Policy Statement of the National Association of Social Workers regarding Family Planning and Reproductive Choice.

H-7890

We believe in the same quality and access of healthcare for all, including those made legal by Roe v. Wade.

The Federal Hyde Amendment prohibits federal tax dollars being spent on abortion with the exception of cases of rape, incest endangerment of life of the mother. Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont and 14 other states utilize state dollars for low income women to make available reproductive services and we feel Rhode Island should do the same.

As a basic human right, all women should have access, regardless of ability to pay, to all reproductive healthcare services based on their decisions about their own bodies. To ensure access, we must include public funding for low income women for all reproductive health care needs.

NASW Policy Statement on Family Planning and Reproduction Choice

The NASW position concerning family-planning, abortion, and other reproductive health services is based on the bedrock principles of self-determination, human rights, and social justice:

- Every individual, within the context of her or his value system, must have access to family planning, abortion, and other reproductive services.
- The use of all reproductive health services, including abortion, must be voluntary and preserve the individual's right to privacy.
- Women (in particular women of color, women in institutions, and women from other vulnerable groups) should not be unethically used in the testing and development of new reproductive techniques and technologies.
- The nature of the reproductive health services the client receives should be a matter of client self-determination in consultation with a qualified healthcare provider furnishing them.
- Public policies and legislation, nationally and internationally, must support a woman's authority over her sexual life and reproductive capacity, free from coercion, violence, and discrimination.
- Lesbians, gay men, and both male to female and female to male transgender people, as well as those who feel more comfortable living androgynously, are as capable as any other people of being good parents and should have equal access to parenting support services.
- Social workers to choose to restrict their services to clients in the community in a way that deprives their clients or community of a comprehensive consideration of all legal reproductive health options, have a responsibility to disclose the limited scope of their services and to assist clients in obtaining comprehensive services elsewhere.

Availability of and Access to Services

NASW Supports:

- The fundamental right of each individual throughout the world to manage his or her fertility and to have access to a full range of effective family-planning and reproductive health services, regardless of the individual's income, marital status, age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or residence; these services include, but are not limited to contraception; and emergency contraception; fertility enhancement; prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, STIs, and the human papillomavirus (HPV); prenatal, birthing, and postpartum care; sterilization, abortion services, and adoption rights.
- A woman's right to obtain an abortion, perform according to accepted medical standards and in an environment free of harassment or threat for both patients and providers.
- Reproductive health services, including abortion services, that are confidential, available at a reasonable cost, and covered in public and private health insurance plans on a par with other kinds of health services (contraceptive equity).
- Improved access to the full range of reproductive health services, including abortion services, for groups currently underserved in the United States, including people with low income and those who rely on Medicaid to pay for their healthcare, adolescents, individual challenges and needs, sex workers, single people, lesbians, people of color and those from nondominant ethnic and cultural groups, those in rural areas, and those in the many countries

and municipalities they currently do not have providers of services.

- Public and private adoption services that better address the needs of birth parents and that invite women and men, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression, to consider adoption as a genuine alternative to abortion or parenting, contributing to a broader range of options.
- National, state, and local public awareness campaigns and educational programs relating to reproductive health and choice.

If you have any questions regarding this written testimony, please feel free to contact me at 401-274-4940 or rhodeislandnasw@gmail.com.

Respectively Submitted,

Rick Harris, LICSW
Executive Director