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CT legislative caucus names abortion, gender care among 2026 priorities

The Connecticut legislature's Reproductive Rights Caucus unveiled its 2026 priorities Wednesday, which include funding for Planned Parenthood and boosting safety measures for patients and doctors providing emergency reproductive care.

In a press conference, co-Chairs Rep. Matt Blumenthal, D-Stamford, and Rep. Jillian Gilchrest, D-West Hartford — joined at the podium by roughly a dozen caucus members — outlined their goals for this legislative session. Aside from funding and safety, members said ensuring equitable access to gender-affirming care was a key priority.

Gilchrest said the caucus was prioritizing legislative issues that have recently come under attack in many parts of the country.

“The Trump administration, Republicans in Congress and Republicans in states across this country continue to limit individuals’ access to the reproductive health care they need,” Gilchrest said. “We are standing up and continuing to push for changes that would make sure people can access the care they need in the state of Connecticut when they need it.”

Blumenthal said the caucus's goal is to give Connecticut residents affordable, legal and reliable access to “the full spectrum of reproductive health care that they need and deserve.”

This year, the caucus wants \$1.9 million for Planned Parenthood to make up for the loss of federal funding. Blumenthal said funding Planned Parenthood is a continuing priority from last year as legislators stress the importance of ensuring that patients still have access to reproductive and gender-affirming care in Connecticut.

“Planned Parenthood is the most important provider of low income patients’ reproductive health care within the state,” Blumenthal said. “They serve hundreds of thousands of people. It would be a disaster if they couldn’t continue that care.”

At the press conference, Rep. Sarah Keitt, D-Fairfield, spoke from personal experience about the importance of access to gender-affirming care: Keitt's 20-year-old child is transgender and nonbinary.

“The gender-affirming care that they received was life saving and really allowed them to become an amazing young adult, and I want to make sure that they can continue to get that type of care here in Connecticut,” Keitt said. “We have transgender children who are dying daily because they are afraid of the backlash that they’re going to get and that they can’t find the health care that they need.”

“Gender affirming care is health care,” Keitt said. “Reproductive health care is health care.”

The caucus is also looking to enhance the state's reproductive rights "shield law," which provides statutory protections for providers of abortion and gender-affirming care. The act was amended last year to expand legal protections for patients and providers and to protect patient information.

Blumenthal said the caucus is seeking to expand the law even further by protecting providers who give care through telehealth. Gilchrest confirmed via text that this was an initiative from last session that didn't pass, but they are working on new language for it.

The caucus wants to protect patient and provider information by allowing providers to claim mailing addresses and mailboxes that would be administered by the Secretary of the State. They also want to make it possible to keep the names of reproductive health care providers off prescription medication bottles.

The caucus is also looking to strengthen the state's Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) to "ensure that emergency patients of all kinds, including those who need abortion care, can receive the care that they deserve and need," Blumenthal said.

Lawmakers also want to pass a number of other initiatives to expand access to reproductive and gender-affirming care, including expanded Medicaid coverage of birth control and gender-affirming care and the removal of testosterone and abortion pills mifepristone and misoprostol from the state drug monitoring list — which would make them more accessible to patients statewide.

Gilchrest, who is in the midst of a campaign for Connecticut's first congressional district against 14-term incumbent John Larson, also said that the caucus will be supporting the work of other caucuses and groups this session, like those pushing for a child tax credit of \$600 per child for up to three children to help parents afford to raise families in Connecticut.

Upon concluding her remarks, Gilchrest asked if anyone at the press conference had questions. A man, who did not give his name, quickly spoke up, calling on lawmakers to "protect life" and adding, "what you guys are doing has to be stopped."