

January 29, 2024

Representative Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Chair of the House Committee on Corporations
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H7013 – An Act Relating to Businesses and Professions – Ryan’s Law

Dear Mr. Chairman and honorable Committee Members,

As the Chief Operating Officer at VICTA, an agency that provides substance use, mental health, and medical services on Elmwood Avenue, I am submitting this testimony in opposition to this bill. Although the intent of this legislation is clearly positive, it is likely to cause a great deal more harm to members of our community.

One of the driving forces behind our current opioid/overdose crisis has been the abrupt termination of individuals receiving pain medication, the undertreatment of pain due to prescribers’ fear of legal consequences, and the associated shift to people purchasing unregulated pills or other opioids ‘off the street’. Policing medical practices does not allow providers to deliver individualized care. We have seen the impact of this in the context of methadone clinics, where for decades our treatment plans were driven predominantly by federal regulations and not what was best for the people we serve. These barriers, on the surface intended to protect people, in fact caused many to either avoid seeking treatment or to disengage because the strict rules left no room for their unique circumstances. Since SAMHSA’s COVID-19 changes, we have seen positive outcomes, happier clients, and improved quality of care, which is what those of us who have chosen a helping profession want most.

In summary, I urge you to reject this bill and let prescribers and patients determine what interventions are best based on their individual factors, not based on fear.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Peterson', with a stylized flourish above the name.

Lisa Peterson, LMHC/LCDP/LCDS/MAC