



March 5, 2024

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Chair
House Committee on Health and Human Services
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 7736 - An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Alcoholism

Dear Chair Donovan:

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) and the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH) write in support of H 7736, which would require BHDDH to coordinate with RIDOH to propose revisions to Chapters 1.10, and 10.1 of Title 23, entitled *Alcoholism and Emergency Commitment for Drug Intoxication*, respectively, including updates and revisions of statutory language and evidence-based best practices. Specifically, H 7736 would update the current statutory language using "alcoholics" to "people with alcohol use disorder (AUD)" consistent with best practices.

Both BHDDH and RIDOH are committed to ensuring that statutory wording reflects evidence-based best practices and eliminates out-of-date wording. H 7736 would require BHDDH to coordinate with RIDOH and any other appropriate public or private agencies, organizations, or individuals to propose revisions and updates to this chapter. As noted, updates would include, but not be limited to, updates or revisions to statutory language, definitions, and evidence-based best practices. H 7736 would also require BHDDH to report the proposed revisions and updates, described in this subsection, to the General Assembly, members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, and the House Committee on Health, Education, and Welfare on or before January 1, 2025.

For people with substance use disorder (SUD), fear and bias regarding addiction may stem from antiquated and inaccurate beliefs that addiction is a moral failing, instead of what we know it to be—a chronic, treatable disease from which patients can recover and continue to lead healthy lives. Feeling stigmatized can reduce the willingness of individuals with SUD to seek treatment. Incorporating non-stigmatizing language and evidence-based practices in Rhode Island's State statutes will ensure and reflect an accurate, science-based understanding of SUD.

Both BHDDH and RIDOH applaud the sponsors for addressing this important issue and stand by willing to carry out the responsibilities outlined in the proposed legislation by the specified deadline.

Sincerely,

Louis A. Cerbo, Ed.D., Interim Director
Department of Behavioral Healthcare,
Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals

Utpala Bandy, MD, MPH, Interim Director
Department of Health

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services
The Honorable Jennifer Boylan
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy