



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
**OFFICE OF GOVERNOR DANIEL J. MCKEE**

February 6, 2025

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan  
Chairwoman  
House Committee on Health and Human Services  
82 Smith Street, House Lounge  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**RE: Letter of Support H 5171 - An Act Relating To Health And Safety -- Harm Reduction Center Advisory Committee And Pilot Program**

Dear Chairwoman Donovan,

Thank you for the opportunity to write in support of H 5171 - An Act Relating To Health And Safety - Harm Reduction Center Advisory Committee And Pilot Program.

Harm Reduction Centers (HRC) are a key part of our state strategy to reduce overdose deaths and connect people to essential treatment and recovery support services. HRCs have trained staff to administer naloxone if needed, provide fentanyl test strips, and help prevent other transmittable diseases. Individuals are also supported through referrals to substance use and/or opioid use disorder treatment and counseling, as well as housing, employment, and legal services.

A recent study<sup>1</sup> of overdose death shows that a staggering 75% of overdose victims were unaccompanied and using drugs alone, a behavior strongly associated with increased mortality. By providing individuals with a place to consume pre-obtained controlled substances under the supervision of trained personnel, HRCs are saving lives and mitigating the impact of the devastating opioid epidemic.

The first state-licensed HRC in the country, Project Weber/RENEW, has been operational since January 19, 2025 and needs more time beyond the original March 2026 sunset to collect data to evaluate the effectiveness of this service model in saving lives impacted by the opioid crisis. In its first few weeks in operation, Project Weber/RENEW has already outreached to approximately 3,000 people and potentially saved the lives of 7 Rhode Islanders through overdose reversal

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<sup>1</sup> Deo, V. S., Bhullar, M. K., Gilson, T. P., Flannery, D. J., & Fulton, S. E. (2024). The Need to Rethink Harm Reduction for People Using Drugs Alone to Reduce Overdose Fatalities. *Substance use & misuse*, 59(3), 450–458. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10826084.2023.2280534>

Chairwoman Donovan

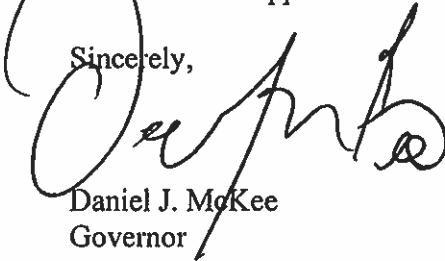
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medications. Even one more life lost to substance use disorder and the opioid epidemic is one too many and HRCs are a critical preventative resource.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation, and I urge the committee to support HRCs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan McKee", written over the typed name and title.

Daniel J. McKee  
Governor

CC: Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services  
The Honorable John G. Edwards  
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House