



Mayor of Providence

Brett P. Smiley

February 6, 2025

Representative Susan R. Donovan
Chair, House Health and Human Services Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Donovan and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am writing in reference to House Bill 5171, *AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- HARM REDUCTION CENTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND PILOT PROGRAM*. If passed, this bill would remove the sunset provision of the four-year pilot program to prevent drug overdoses through the establishment of harm reduction centers, thereby creating a permanent program.

As the first municipality in Rhode Island to authorize the operation of a Harm Reduction Center, Providence is well aware of the positive impact these centers have had in other cities around the world. They not only prevent overdoses through supervised consumption but also serve as critical access points for healthcare services, basic needs, and recovery resources. Furthermore, they help reduce public drug use, litter, and emergency response demands, ultimately improving the quality of life for surrounding communities.

However, given that implementation has only just begun in 2025, Providence respectfully requests a modification to this legislation to allow for a more thorough evaluation of the pilot program's impact. Specifically, we propose extending the pilot phase by a few years before making it a permanent program. Extending the sunset provision would provide crucial time for a comprehensive assessment of the program's effectiveness, ensuring that future policy decisions are based on thorough evidence and careful consideration.

As one of the communities most deeply affected by the overdose crisis, Providence remains committed to ensuring a robust continuum of care for individuals in need of support. We stand by harm reduction efforts that reduce stigma, uphold dignity, and empower individuals to seek the help they deserve. At the same time, we recognize the importance of rigorous evaluation to ensure our initiatives effectively prioritize the health and well-being of all Rhode Islanders while fostering long-term positive outcomes.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the Mayor's Office with any questions.

Sincerely,

Brett P. Smiley
Mayor