

## STATE OF RHODE ISLAND



Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

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April 8, 2025

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr., Chair  
House Committee on Corporations  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: 2025 – H 5829 – An Act Relating To Food And Drugs -- The Rhode Island Cannabis Act**

Dear Chair Solomon:

I am writing to express a concern regarding **H 5829** and the potential impact of revenue from the state cannabis excise tax.

The Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH) understands that the proposed bill seeks to establish a social equity assistance program and a disproportionately impacted areas investment fund, which are laudable goals. However, we are concerned about the proposed changes to the allocation of the state cannabis excise tax revenue, as outlined in Section 2 of the bill.

Currently, the statute directs this revenue to the "marijuana trust fund" pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-13(d). BHDDH relies on this funding to support a position responsible for substance use prevention, health policy, and communications, focused on substance use prevention related to non-medical youth and adult cannabis use. This position includes the development of policies and enforcement strategies intended to reduce retail access to cannabis and associated products by underage individuals.

The proposed bill would divert fifty percent (50%) of this revenue to the newly established social equity funds. While these new funds may support some initiatives that align with the BHDDH's mission, there is no guarantee that the level of funding for our existing programs and services would be maintained or increased under this new allocation. The potential reduction in funding to the "marijuana trust fund" could negatively impact the BHDDH's ability to provide essential services to the vulnerable populations we serve.

We respectfully request that the Committee carefully consider the current beneficiaries of the "marijuana trust fund" and the potential consequences of reducing its revenue stream.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Richard Leclerc', written in a cursive style.

Richard Leclerc  
Director

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Corporations  
The Honorable Leonela Felix  
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House  
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy