

The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Education

Joseph M. McNamara, Chair

Thomas E. Noret, First Vice Chair

Rebecca M. Kislak, Second Vice Chair

Rhode Island State House

82 Smith Street

Providence, RI 02903

March 18, 2025

Re: Testimony in Support of H5595, AN ACT RELATING TO FOOD AND DRUGS -- THE GOOD SAMARITAN OVERDOSE PREVENTION ACT OF 2016 {LC1850/1}

My name is Dr. Jeffrey Bratberg, a clinical professor of pharmacy practice and clinical research at the University of Rhode Island College of Pharmacy, and an expert in medications used to treat addiction and reverse opioid overdoses, submitting testimony on behalf of myself.

Although on-campus opioid overdoses are relatively uncommon, they do occur and can sometimes be fatal. [First-year student Sidney McIntyre-Starko](#) died of cardiac arrest caused by fentanyl poisoning last January while residing at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. This incident was attributed to "catastrophic delays" in the effectiveness of the university's emergency response system. At the time of Sidney's death, students living in UVic residences **did not** have access to naloxone in their dorms and **had not received any orientation** on the dangers of the local drug supply or how to recognize and respond to an overdose.

One study showed that college students are **willing** to respond to an overdose, yet **only 1 of 7** of them reported knowledge of how to administer naloxone. **1 in 3 were uncomfortable** calling 911 in an overdose event.¹

I support the passage of H5595 because I do not want to find out that a Rhode Island college student died or was injured from an opioid overdose because people who *could* respond, lacked training on how to recognize and respond to one.

This policy will improve opioid overdose response and student safety in residential college settings across Rhode Island. This bill is modeled on a similar [bill from New York that passed](#) and [was implemented recently](#). The state of Washington also has passed and implemented [similar legislation](#), and Massachusetts has proposed [SD781](#) this legislative session.

This bill includes the following components:

Training: Every campus of higher education chartered in Rhode Island will be required to provide training in the administration of opioid antagonists (such as naloxone) to all staff members employed in their student residential departments, including resident assistants.

Supply and Access: Campuses will maintain onsite supplies of opioid antagonists in all college-owned or college-operated housing. These supplies will be accessible to all residential staff for use during emergencies involving suspected opioid overdoses.

Protective Clause: The legislation includes protections for residential staff members, ensuring that any person acting reasonably and in good faith in compliance with this law will not be subject to criminal, civil, or administrative liability.

Our ultimate goal is to prevent opioid overdoses in all on-campus housing across Rhode Island by ensuring immediate access to life-saving measures used effectively and quickly by the trained first responders who live & work there.

Sincerely,

Jef Bratberg, PharmD, FAPHA

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¹Freibott CE, Vest N, Stein MD, Lipson SK. Opioid Overdose Knowledge Among Adolescents and Young Adults. *JAMA Pediatrics*. 2024;178(6):618-620. doi:[10.1001/jamapediatrics.2024.0561](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2024.0561)