



March 18, 2025

The Honorable Representative Joseph M. McNamara  
Chair of the House Education Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: Support for House Bill 5595 – Overdose Prevention on College Campuses**

Dear Chairman McNamara and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Mental Health Association of Rhode Island (MHARI), I appreciate the opportunity to share our support for House Bill 5595. We thank Representative McGaw for introducing this legislation.

According to the Rhode Island Department of Health, last year we lost 404 Rhode Islanders to overdose deaths. It's a stark reminder of the ongoing opioid crisis. College students are increasingly affected by opioid misuse, with national studies indicating that 7% of college students have misused prescription pain relievers in the past year.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that opioid overdoses remain a leading cause of preventable death in the U.S., with over 80,000 opioid-related fatalities occurring nationwide in 2021. Naloxone, an opioid antagonist, has been proven to reverse opioid overdoses when administered in time, saving countless lives. Making this life-saving medication available and equipping campus residential staff, including resident assistants, with the necessary training will significantly enhance safety on college campuses.

A report by Campus Drug Prevention, which is a project of the Drug Enforcement Administration, highlights that colleges implementing naloxone access policies have seen a measurable increase in overdose response effectiveness. They report reducing fatal outcomes by as much as 30% and increasing their sense of preparedness.

We hope that this bill will contribute to ongoing efforts to prevent overdoses and protect young adults as they navigate their college years. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

*Laurie-Marie Pisciotta*

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