



★ WORKING FAMILIES POWER ★

Representative Susan Donovan, Chair
House Health and Human Services Committee

February 29, 2024

Support for H-7444 – An Act Relating to Food and Drugs – Wholesale Prescription Drug Importation Program

Chair Donovan and Members of the Committee,

Rhode Island Working Families Power writes in strong support of H-7444, Rep. Tanzi's bill to establish a program for Rhode Island to import wholesale prescription drugs from Canada to create cost savings for Rhode Island residents. Working Families Power advocates for policies that promote economic justice and allow all people to meet their basic needs and live with dignity, which this bill would help promote.

Too many residents across Rhode Island currently face the problem week after week of choosing between paying for medicine and food or rent. And it's not just seniors who are struggling but anyone who needs medication for issues like asthma or anxiety.

Unlike the Canadian government, the US federal government currently does not bargain with big pharmaceutical companies to lower the costs of most prescription drugs. Merck charges diabetes patients in the United States \$6,900 for Januvia when the exact same product can be purchased in Canada for \$900.

Florida recently received federal authorization to import prescription drugs from Canada after passing similar legislation. Authorizing the state government to import medicines from Canada is a concrete step we can take to reduce that burden for thousands of families.

After receiving federal approval like Florida has done, Rhode Island would designate a state agency or contract with a licensed wholesaler to import drugs that meet FDA standards and provide significant savings. The bill also includes provisions for annual reporting on the

program's implementation and effects, including cost savings and the number of prescriptions dispensed.

This bill would lead to cost savings for thousands of Rhode Islanders who depend on prescription medications and reduce a burden for working people across the state. We hope the committee will move forward with this legislation so that it can be enacted into law.

Thank you,

Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler

**Progressive Governance Director
Rhode Island Working Families Power**