

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND



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April 23, 2025

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Chair
House Committee on Health and Human Services
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: 2025 – H 5630 – An Act Relating To Food And Drugs – Compassionate Access To Medical Cannabis Act

Dear Chair Donovan:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH), I am writing to express concerns regarding the potential implications of the proposed "Compassionate Access to Medical Cannabis Act," specifically concerning its impact on the services we provide at Eleanor Slater Hospital (ESH).

BHDDH is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all individuals under our care. While we acknowledge the intent of this legislation to provide compassionate access to medical cannabis for terminally ill patients, we have concerns about the practical implementation of this act within a hospital setting, particularly given the implications of federal law.

Cannabis remains a Schedule I controlled substance under federal law, a discrepancy with H 5630 that places healthcare facilities, including ESH, in a difficult position. Compliance with this state law, if enacted, could potentially jeopardize federal funding, including Medicare and Medicaid, which are critical for the operation of ESH and the provision of care to our patients. Following such a state law would also raise the possibility of federal enforcement actions against the hospital, its staff, and the state.

BHDDH urges the General Assembly to carefully consider these concerns and the potential impact on our healthcare facilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,

Richard Leclerc
Director

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health & Human Services
 The Honorable Susan R. Donovan
 Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
 Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy