

March 25, 2026

Representative Carol Hagan McEntee
Chairwoman
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly

c/o Clerk Roberta DiMezza
HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov

Support for Approval of H7743

Dear Representative McEntee and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lindsey Spangler, and I am the Executive Director of Red Sneakers for Oakley (RSFO). I am also a Family Nurse Practitioner and a food allergy mom. I am writing to respectfully urge your support for H7743.

RSFO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded in 2016 after the tragic loss of 11-year-old Oakley Debbs, who died from an anaphylactic allergic reaction. When Oakley collapsed, police officers arrived first, but they were unequipped to treat anaphylaxis. We truly believe that if those officers had been equipped with epinephrine, Oakley would still be alive today. His story is the reason our organization exists and why we are committed to closing this dangerous gap in emergency response.

Our mission is to save lives through food allergy education, awareness, and increasing access to life-saving medication epinephrine. We work to bridge the gaps that exist between families, schools, first responders, medical professionals, and the public when it comes to recognizing and responding to anaphylaxis.

Rhode Island has one of the highest rates of food allergies in the country, with nearly 14% of the population affected and that number continues to grow. H7743 is a simple, practical, and urgently needed step that expands the life-saving tools already available to police officers. This bill requiring police officers to carry epinephrine, just as they already carry naloxone and AEDs, ensures they are equipped to respond to anaphylaxis immediately.

Anaphylaxis is a rapid, systemic allergic reaction that can become fatal within minutes. It accounts for an estimated 45,000–50,000 emergency department visits each year. Epinephrine must be administered immediately at the first signs of a reaction, as delays significantly increase the risk of severe complications or death.

While EMS personnel and vehicles carry epinephrine, police officers are often the first to arrive on scene. Equipping officers with epinephrine autoinjectors will allow them to begin life-saving treatment while EMS is en route. In an anaphylactic emergency, those minutes matter.

RSFO has already trained and equipped two police departments in Illinois with epinephrine, and officers have expressed how critical this tool is in the field. We stand ready to support Rhode Island in the same way.

We respectfully ask for your support in closing this critical gap in emergency response and ensuring that Rhode Island families are protected.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lindsey Spangler, FNP
Executive Director of Red Sneakers for Oakley