



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
OFFICE OF THE MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE  
John O. Pastore Center  
25 Howard Avenue, Bldg, #57  
Cranston, RI 02920

Representative Evan P. Shanley, Chair  
House Committee on State Government and Elections  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

April 24, 2025

**Bill No.** H 6165  
**By:** Representatives Spears, Noret, McEntee, Read, Cotter, Craven, Fogarty, Hull, Tanzi, and Felix  
**Entitled:** AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT – STATE POLICE

Dear Chair Shanley and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony on this bill, which would create a Purple Alert system to aid in the location of missing adults with certain medical conditions. The Office of the Mental Health Advocate (OMHA) supports efforts to ensure safety for individuals living with intellectual disabilities and psychiatric disabilities. I am, however, concerned that some language in this bill as written would enable the dissemination to the public of protected healthcare information of the individual who is the subject of the alert. Sharing information about psychiatric diagnoses with members of the broadcast media, as permitted by this bill, would be an invasive violation of the individual's privacy and right to keep healthcare information confidential and could contribute to stigma and discrimination. While the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and R.I. General Laws § 5-37.3-4(b)(4)(11) permit the sharing of otherwise confidential personal health information with law enforcement in certain emergency situations, further release of that information by police to the public at large creates a concern. This violation of privacy could be lessened with the addition of language directing that only descriptive information that is necessary to identify a missing individual be disseminated, not including the individual's medical diagnosis.

Respectfully submitted,  
/s/ Megan N. Clingham, Esq.  
Megan N. Clingham, Esq.  
Director  
Office of the Mental Health  
Advocate