

Rhode Island Chapter

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American Academy of Pediatrics 
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®

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Testimony in support of House Bill 7534
House Committee on Health and Human Services
March 3, 2026

Dear Chairperson Donovan and Members of the Committee,

The Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics **strongly supports H7534**, increasing access to cessation medications by giving pharmacists prescriptive authority for those cessation medications.

Tobacco use continues to be an enormous problem, with over 47 million adults currently using a tobacco product in the US.¹ In Rhode Island, about 1,800 deaths each year are attributed to smoking and other tobacco use.² Tobacco use not only affects users, secondhand exposure can lead to numerous health problems in children including sudden infant death syndrome, increased incidence and severity of asthma and bronchiolitis, ear infections, and childhood cancers.³

The majority of Rhode Island adults who smoke cigarettes want to quit (56%)⁴ and many Rhode Island youth who use e-cigarettes have tried quitting.⁵ FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications have been shown to be an effective way to quit and there are clear guidelines provided for use by the US Public Health Service.⁶

However, the cost of these FDA-approved cessation medications can be prohibitive for many. With a prescription, treatments like the nicotine patch, gum, and lozenge are covered for Medicaid enrollees in Rhode Island. Unfortunately, many patients have limited access to a primary care physician who could provide such a prescription and it is estimated that only 2% of Medicaid enrollees in Rhode Island actually receive a prescription for tobacco cessation.⁷ Pharmacies, which are well dispersed in the community, can offer extended and weekend hours, many without an appointment. Allowing trained pharmacists to write prescriptions for FDA-approved cessation medications can increase access to low- or no-cost treatments for Medicaid enrollees and other patients in Rhode Island, helping many to quit using tobacco.

We urge you to pass H7534 to support cessation efforts in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,



Allison Heinly, MD, FAAP
Board of Directors
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2. Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/rhode_island
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4. Rhode Island Department of Health. Center for Health Data and Analysis. [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#). 2024-2022.
5. Rhode Island Department of Health. Center for Health Data Analysis. [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#). 2023.
6. Fiore MC, Jaen CR, Baker TB, et al. *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence: 2008 Update. Clinical Practice Guideline*. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service; May 2008
7. Ku L, Bruen BK, Steinmetz E, Bysshe T. Medicaid tobacco cessation: big gaps remain in efforts to get smokers to quit. *Health Aff (Millwood)*. 2016;35(1):62-70.

