

Steven Sepe

From: Kenny Correia <kennycorreia1@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 8:44 AM
To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Cc: Rep. Donovan, Susan R; Rep. Giraldo, Joshua J.; Rep. Potter, Brandon C.; Rep. Ackerman, Mia A.; Rep. Bennett, David A.; Rep. Boylan, Jennifer; Rep. Fogarty, Kathleen A.; Rep. Cotter, Megan L.; Rep. Handy, Arthur; Rep. Hopkins, Marie A.; Rep. Kislak, Rebecca M.; Rep. McGaw, Michelle E.; Rep. Place, David J.; Rep. Speakman, June; Rep. Stewart, Jennifer A.; Rep. Shekarchi, K Joseph; Rep. Casimiro, Julie A.; Rep. Solomon, Joseph J. Jr.; Rep. Morales, David; Lynne Urbani; Chris Federico; Rhode Island Pharmacists Association; Kenny Correia; Kenny Correia
Subject: SUPPORT - H7534: Empowering Pharmacists to Prescribe Tobacco Cessation and Mandating Direct Reimbursement

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Body: Hi, my name is Dr. Kenny Correia, PharmD, BCACP, CDOE, and I am writing in strong support of bill **H7534**. This act provides a long-overdue framework for pharmacists to prescribe FDA-approved tobacco cessation therapies and, most importantly, ensures that these clinical services are recognized and reimbursed by all health insurance carriers.

Impact Statement: As a Board-Certified Ambulatory Care Pharmacist and Certified Diabetes Outpatient Educator (CDOE) working in a Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH), I witness the clinical devastation of tobacco use daily. H7534 removes the administrative hurdles that currently prevent pharmacists from being the front-line solution for smoking cessation in Rhode Island.

Formal Testimony: To the Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services:

Tobacco use remains a primary driver of chronic disease and healthcare expenditure in our state. **H7534** is a vital piece of legislation because it addresses both clinical access and financial sustainability. By establishing prescriptive authority and mandating insurance coverage, this bill allows pharmacists to function as full partners in the medical team.

The importance of H7534 is defined by three critical factors:

- **Direct Reimbursement Without Barriers:** Section 5 of this bill is a game-changer. It mandates that insurance carriers provide coverage for pharmacist services within their lawful scope of practice without requiring a physician's supervision, signature, or referral. For too long, pharmacists have been treated as "overhead" or "invisible providers." This bill acknowledges that if a pharmacist performs a clinical assessment that would be covered if done by an NP or PA, it must be covered when done by a pharmacist.
- **The Economics of Preventative Care:** We have the data to prove that integrated pharmacist care works. Landmark research shows that collaborative pharmacist-led models deliver a **Return on Investment (ROI) of up to 504%**, primarily by achieving a **23.4% reduction in hospitalizations** (Matzke et al., 2018). Tobacco cessation is the single most cost-effective preventative measure in

medicine; every \$1 invested in helping a patient quit saves multiple dollars in avoided cardiac and respiratory events.

- **Closing the Provider Gap:** Following the closure of Anchor Medical Associates and the subsequent displacement of 25,000 patients, our primary care system is under unprecedented strain. Patients should not have to wait months for a PCP appointment just to get a prescription for a nicotine patch or varenicline. Pharmacists are accessible clinicians who can provide immediate education, screening, and therapy adjustments, ensuring that no "window of willingness" for a patient to quit is ever missed.
- **Safety and Integration:** H7534 includes robust safety measures, including a 5-day notification requirement to the patient's PCP and mandated education approved by the Board of Pharmacy. This ensures that the pharmacist's intervention is not a siloed event but a fully integrated part of the patient's care plan.

By supporting **H7534**, you are choosing to fund prevention over hospitalization. You are empowering doctoral-level clinicians to use their full scope of expertise and ensuring they are compensated fairly for the value they bring to the healthcare system.

I urge you to support H7534 to ensure a healthier, more sustainable Rhode Island.

Dr. Kenny Correia, PharmD, BCACP, CDOE

Director of Pharmacy Services

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