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March 3, 2026

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

RE: H 7923 – An Act Relating to Food and Drugs – Uniform Controlled Substances Act

Dear Chair Donovan:

Please accept this letter regarding H 7923, legislation that would revise sections of the *Uniform Controlled Substances Act* to remove specific opioid dosage requirements and update the act with current standards of professional practice. It would also repeal Chapter 37.5 of Title 5 relating to intractable pain treatment, incorporating pertinent elements from that Chapter into the revised statute. This act was introduced at the request of the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH).

Although the total number of opioid-involved fatal overdoses in 2024 decreased by 36% compared to 2022, fatal overdoses continue to be a significant public health issue in Rhode Island. In Rhode Island, every town has seen an overdose. Non-Hispanic, Black Rhode Islanders still experience the highest burden of fatal overdoses followed by non-Hispanic, White Rhode Islanders, and Hispanic or Latino Rhode Islanders. Opioids and fentanyl continue to drive the overdose epidemic in Rhode Island. In 2024, there were 206 fatal opioid-involved overdoses among Rhode Islanders. In the first six months of 2025, there were 85 fatal opioid-involved overdoses among Rhode Islanders.

Rhode Island's statutory requirements include a concerning discrepancy with national standards for opioid prescribing and dosage requirements established in 2022, which have become the national standard of care. H 7923 aligns the Rhode Island statute with those national standards. Revising the statute will allow RIDOH to update its regulations to ensure the same standard of care as in other states. Further, Rhode Island's *Intractable Pain Treatment Act* is outdated and language updating the treatment of patients with chronic intractable pain has been added to this bill, ensuring that updated requirements for the treatment of acute, chronic, and chronic intractable pain are in one statute. Rhode Island prescribers need statutory and regulatory requirements that align with current standards of professional practice to ensure the health and safety of their patients who may need opioid medications.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this important public health legislation that will help save lives, help prevent addiction, and ensure that patients in need of opioid medications have

access to them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerome M. Larkin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jerome M. Larkin, MD
Director

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services
The Honorable Matthew S. Dawson
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy