



RI Department of Health
Three Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 771
www.health.ri.gov

April 30, 2026

The Honorable Melissa Murray, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

RE: S 2851 -- An Act Relating to Businesses and Professions -- Pharmacists Test-and-Treat Authority Act

Dear Chair Murray:

Please accept this letter regarding S 2851, legislation that would authorize pharmacists to order, perform, and interpret CLIA-waived tests authorized by Statewide protocol and to prescribe medications. This act would further permit such test-and-treat authority to be covered by all health insurance carriers. The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) defers to the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC) and Medicaid on the health insurance coverage provisions included in this bill. RIDOH is in conceptual support of S 2851, with amendments.

Rhode Island's Rural Health Transformation Grant and, more specifically, Section 1 of the Governor's Budget Amendment 6 (Rural Health Transformation Program Amendment) adds a section to R.I.G.L. § 5-19.1 to expand pharmacists' authority to independently prescribe specified drugs, devices, and laboratory tests that are critical to the improvement of public health and are in accordance with the product's federal Food and Drug Administration-approved labeling, including:

- Drugs for Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) of opioid use disorder;
- Nicotine/tobacco cessation products;
- Hyperlipidemia medications;
- Inhalers for COPD or asthma;
- Insulin and diabetes medications;
- Drugs to treat hypertension;
- Treatment for positive infectious disease point-of-care testing for influenza, COVID-19, group A strep, and other infections approved by the Director of RIDOH; and
- Such other drugs, drug categories, or devices set forth in the regulations promulgated by RIDOH in collaboration with the Board of Pharmacy.

Section 2 of the Governor's Budget Amendment 6 amends R.I.G.L. § 5-19.1-2 to change the definition of "practice of pharmacy" by allowing pharmacists to perform clinical laboratory tests beyond "limited function tests" as currently allowed. The provisions included in S 2851 are more limited than those included in the Governor's Budget Amendment. ***It is for this reason that RIDOH respectfully recommends amending S 2851 to align with the Governor's Budget amendment, which is aligned with Rhode Island's Rural Health Transformation***

Grant requirements and authorizes pharmacists to order any laboratory tests (not just CLIA-waived laboratory tests) to prescribe for one of the allowed conditions included in Section 1 of the Budget Amendment.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

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 Senate Committee on Health and Human
Services
The Honorable Pamela J. Lauria
Kristen Silvia, Director of Legislation and Deputy Chief of Staff
Patricia Resende, Director of Senate Policy