

# **Coastline EAP,-RISAS**

931 Jefferson Boulevard Ste 1001  
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886

March 18, 2026

RE: S3099

Honorable Members of the Rhode Island Senate:

I am writing to express my support for the proposed legislative change S3099 to rename Drug Court as Recovery Court. Language plays a powerful role in shaping perceptions, and the term “Drug Court” carries a significant stigma that can negatively affect individuals who are working to rebuild their lives while living with a substance use disorder.

For many participants, being labeled as a “drug offender” or associated with a “drug court” reinforces feelings of shame and guilt. These emotions can undermine confidence and self-worth, both of which are essential components of the recovery process. Recovery requires encouragement, dignity, and the opportunity for individuals to view themselves as capable of positive change. Unfortunately, stigmatizing labels can have the opposite effect and may even hinder progress toward long-term recovery.

Individuals involved in these programs often face significant barriers when seeking employment, housing, education, and community support. The negative connotations associated with the term “Drug Court” can compound those challenges and perpetuate harmful stereotypes about people living with substance use disorders. When individuals internalize these labels, their self-esteem and mental health can suffer, placing them at greater risk of relapsing rather than supporting their movement toward recovery and stability.

The field of recovery has increasingly recognized the importance of person-centered and non-stigmatizing language. Professionals, researchers, and advocates consistently encourage the use of terminology that reflects empathy, dignity, and hope. Renaming Drug Court to Recovery Court aligns with these principles and better reflects the program’s true mission: helping individuals overcome substance use disorders and build healthier, more productive lives.

A name change may seem like a small step, but language matters. Shifting to “Recovery Court” signals a commitment to supporting individuals in recovery rather than defining them by their illness. It communicates respect, reduces stigma, and aligns the justice system with modern recovery-oriented practices.

For these reasons, I strongly support the legislative effort to change the name from Drug Court to Recovery Court. This change would demonstrate compassion, promote dignity, and reinforce a recovery-focused approach for individuals working to overcome substance use disorders.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to policies that support recovery and strengthen our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernard DiLullo, Jr.", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bernard DiLullo, Jr. MSW, Ed. D  
Interim Chief Operating Officer  
Coastline Employee Assistance Program/Rhode Island Student Assistance Program