

Dear Members of the Rhode Island General Assembly,

My name is Jessica Fortier-Goss, MS, LADC1, and I serve as President of the Opiate Treatment Association of Rhode Island (OTARI). In this role, I represent all licensed opioid treatment programs across the state, working daily to support individuals affected by opioid use disorder and to strengthen systems of care that promote recovery and save lives.

I am writing to express strong support for bills H8247 and S3099. These important pieces of legislation represent a meaningful step forward in addressing the ongoing opioid crisis in Rhode Island by improving access to evidence-based treatment and enhancing the quality and coordination of care for those in need.

Opioid treatment programs play a critical role in reducing overdose deaths, improving public health outcomes, and helping individuals regain stability in their lives. The policies outlined in H8247 and S3099 will help ensure that providers can continue to deliver safe, effective, and accessible care while adapting to the evolving needs of our communities.

Additionally, the proposed change in terminology from “drug court” to “recovery court” is a critical and commendable step in reducing stigma and aligning our language with the principles of treatment and recovery. Language matters. The term “drug court” can perpetuate punitive perceptions, whereas “recovery court” more accurately reflects a health-centered, rehabilitative approach. This shift helps foster dignity and respect for participants, encourages greater engagement in treatment, and promotes more positive long-term outcomes. Reducing stigma is essential to ensuring that individuals feel safe seeking help and remaining connected to care.

On behalf of OTARI and the patients and families we serve, I urge you to support and pass these bills. Your leadership and commitment to addressing substance use disorder are vital to the health and well-being of Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Jessica Fortier-Goss, MS, LADC1

President

Opiate Treatment Association of Rhode Island (OTARI)