

January 25, 2021

The Honorable Joshua Miller  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
State of Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Miller:

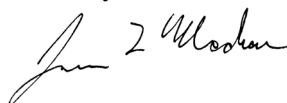
On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, the AMA is writing in support of Rhode Island developing and implementing a pilot Overdose Prevention Site (OPS). Specifically, we support this effort as the OPS would be designed, monitored, and evaluated to generate data to inform policymakers on the feasibility, effectiveness, and legal aspects of an OPS in reducing harms and health care costs related to, among other things, injection drug use.

Notably, the AMA has supported a similar effort in Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup> We were supportive of the Pennsylvania effort due to the need, in that state, for prioritizing individual and community health and well-being through evidence-based solutions to address the harms of drug-related overdose, including the implementation of pilot supervised consumption sites.

The implementation of the OPS in Rhode Island may be particularly timely and essential due to the fact that drug overdose rates in Rhode Island—as in nearly every other state in the nation—have increased in 2020.<sup>2</sup> The AMA is deeply concerned by increasing death involving illicit fentanyl, methamphetamine, and cocaine. We further acknowledge that while overdose involving prescription opioids and heroin may have “stabilized,” it remains far too high.

For these reasons, the AMA supports the development and implementation of the pilot OPS under consideration in Rhode Island. If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Blaney-Koen, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at [daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org](mailto:daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org).

Sincerely,



James L. Madara, MD

cc: Rhode Island Medical Society

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<sup>1</sup> See, Amended Brief of Amici Curiae AIDS United, et al., *United States of American v. Safehouse*. July 3, 2020. Available at <https://www.safehousephilly.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2020-07/amicus%20in%20support%20amended%20brief%20of%20AIDS%20United%20et%20al.%207.3.20.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Data from the Rhode Island Department of Health (DOH) indicates a 26 percent increase in drug overdose deaths in the six-month period from January 1, 2020 – July 31, 2020 compared to January 1, 2019 – July 31, 2019. Preliminary data from the RI DOH also indicates drug-related deaths are at an all-time high. See <https://health.ri.gov/data/drugoverdoses/>