

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

SENATE RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING SEPTEMBER AS SUBSTANCE USE RECOVERY AWARENESS MONTH  
IN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND CALLING FOR THE END OF STIGMA AND  
EMPOWERING RECOVERY THROUGH LANGUAGE IN RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Senator Jonathon Acosta

Date Introduced: February 25, 2025

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1 WHEREAS, Substance use disorders (SUDs) are a public health issue that affect  
2 thousands of Rhode Islanders and their families each year; and

3 WHEREAS, Stigma and discrimination remain significant barriers to individuals seeking  
4 and accessing treatment and recovery support, often leading to negative health outcomes and  
5 societal exclusion; and

6 WHEREAS, Language plays a powerful role in shaping public perceptions, attitudes, and  
7 beliefs about individuals with SUDs, with evidence showing that person-first, non-stigmatizing  
8 language fosters dignity, compassion, and understanding; and

9 WHEREAS, The American Medical Association, the World Health Organization, and  
10 other leading health organizations advocate for replacing stigmatizing terms such as "addict,"  
11 "abuser," and "clean" with person-first language such as "person with a substance use disorder"  
12 and "in recovery"; and

13 WHEREAS, Communities, health professionals, and policymakers must work  
14 collaboratively to create an environment where individuals with SUDs are treated with respect  
15 and supported in their recovery journey; and

16 WHEREAS, Increasing public awareness of the impact of stigma and promoting the  
17 adoption of respectful and inclusive language can contribute to improved outcomes for  
18 individuals with SUDs and their families; and

19 WHEREAS, The statewide recovery advocacy workgroup represents individuals with

1 lived experience, recovery advocates, and key stakeholders and serves as an essential voice for  
2 ensuring that policies are aligned with best practices and community needs; now, therefore be it

3       RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby recognizes the urgent  
4 need to address stigma around substance use disorders and urges state agencies, healthcare  
5 providers, educators, employers, media outlets, and community organizations to adopt person-  
6 first, non-stigmatizing language in their practices, communications, and policies; and be it further

7       RESOLVED, That this Senate hereby supports statewide educational campaigns to raise  
8 awareness of the role of stigma in perpetuating barriers to treatment and recovery, emphasizing  
9 the power of inclusive language and the importance of evidence-based approaches to SUDs; and  
10 be it further

11       RESOLVED, That all Rhode Island laws, regulations, and official publications be  
12 reviewed and revised, as necessary, to ensure the use of non-stigmatizing language when  
13 referring to individuals with SUDs; and be it further

14       RESOLVED, That all future bills and policies related to substance use disorders be  
15 developed in consultation with the statewide recovery advocacy workgroup to ensure that the  
16 voices of those with lived experience are incorporated, and the resulting measures reflect the best  
17 practices for reducing stigma and promoting recovery; and be it further

18       RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby recognizes September  
19 as Substance Use Recovery Awareness Month in the State of Rhode Island in order to highlight  
20 the importance of breaking down stigma, celebrating recovery, and promoting mental health and  
21 wellness across the state; and be it further

22       RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
23 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Governor of the State of Rhode Island,  
24 Daniel J. McKee, the Rhode Island Department of Health, and the Rhode Island Department of  
25 Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH).

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