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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: Senators Acosta, Ujifusa, Felag, Rogers, Paolino, LaMountain, Urso,
Appollonio, Lawson, and Bell
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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