

TAKE ACTION PROTECT YOUR MEDICAL PRIVACY IN RHODE ISLAND



Take Action Today to PROTECT YOUR MEDICAL PRIVACY IN RI! **Tell the Governor to VETO [S 656A](#) and [H 5469A](#)!**

Ever get a prescription for one of these: painkillers, anti-seizure medication, anti-depressants, cough syrup? The RI General Assembly passed legislation that would give law enforcement access to the entire prescription medication records of every Rhode Islander WITHOUT a warrant.

WHAT THIS LEGISLATION DOES:

This legislation eliminates the current requirement for police to obtain a warrant before accessing records in the state prescription drug-monitoring program (PDMP). The legislation is [opposed by more than 15 organizations including the RI Medical Society and the Mental Health Association of RI](#). The ACLU of RI also opposes this legislation, and [you can read our testimony against the House version of this bill here](#).

WHAT IS THE PDMP?

The PDMP contains information on virtually ALL scheduled drugs prescribed by doctors to any Rhode Islander. This includes prescriptions for painkillers, anti-seizure medication, anti-anxiety medication and antidepressants, sleeping pills and migraine medication.

WHY THIS LEGISLATION IS BAD FOR RHODE ISLANDERS:

Requiring a warrant ensures that law enforcement has convinced a neutral magistrate that there is probable cause for an investigation that justifies such a severe intrusion on privacy rights. This judicial oversight is an important check so that police cannot, on their own and without context, look through the medication history of innocent Rhode Islanders in the hope of finding something suspicious. While this bill requires a “certified investigator” to perform the investigation, it does nothing to protect the privacy of intimate medical information from law enforcement overreach.

Just because information about the medications we take is available in a central database for health purposes DOES NOT mean that police should also have access to it. After all, we don't allow police to look into our actual medicine cabinets without a warrant.

WHAT ABOUT THE OPIOID CRISIS?

Allowing police to rummage through these records could also undermine attempts to deal with the current opioid crisis as a medical issue, rather than a criminal one. Will patients with addiction problems avoid requesting prescriptions from doctors because of police access to the database and seek illegal drugs instead? Will doctors be reluctant to prescribe necessary medication because they fear investigation? If the concern is that there are “pill mills” operating in Rhode Island (for which there is no evidence), the Department of Health currently has the ability to examine the prescription practices of doctors – and exercises that ability often, while being free to report suspicious information to law enforcement. This is the crux of the [RI Medical Society's opposition to the House version of this bill, which can be read here](#).

If police can't prove to a court of law that there's reason for them to look at Rhode Islanders' prescriptions, then they shouldn't be looking.

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Call 222-2080 today!