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**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO 18-H 7867,
RELATING TO THE PRESCRIPTION DRUG MONITORING DATABASE**

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The ACLU of Rhode Island opposes this legislation, which would create yet another exception – and a very broad one, at that – to the confidentiality of the state’s prescription drug monitoring database. It would allow health insurers, workers’ compensation insurers and HMOs, among others, access to the database to determine, among other things, “disparities in patterns of prescribing,” “drug diversion,” and “care management.”

This database contains deeply private medical information. The law already contains ten exemptions from the confidentiality that was supposed to be a key component of its creation, including an exception added last year over the objections of the ACLU and numerous medical organizations, giving law enforcement agencies limited access to the database without a warrant.

Adding this eleventh exemption demonstrates a lack of serious concern about the need for keeping this intimate health care information confidential to the maximum extent possible. Unfortunately, this legislation follows a disturbing pattern. A database containing very private information is set up with strict limits on access, but over time, it slowly morphs into a general warehouse available to more and more third parties for additional uses.

Giving insurers access to this database may be helpful, but that is simply not a sufficient reason to undermine patient confidentiality in the manner this bill does. We therefore oppose passage of this legislation.