

ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

**TESTIMONY ON 25-H 5171,
AN ACT RELATING TO HARM REDUCTION CENTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE
AND PILOT PROGRAM
February 6, 2025**

The ACLU of RI strongly supports this legislation and its goal of eliminating the sunset clause for the creation and maintenance of harm reduction centers in the state.

In first supporting passage of this law a few years ago, we noted that it would be an extremely important step forward in addressing the state's spiraling opioid overdose crisis. We know that the current punitive law enforcement approach to the drug problem simply isn't working and, instead, bears responsibility for too many avoidable overdose deaths. Providing drug users with a safe and medically supervised environment, as this law does, can not only reduce the death toll from drug overdoses but can also serve as a critical entry-point for offering and affording people treatment. Passage of this bill is necessary to prevent this important program from failing before it gets off the ground.

We would like to suggest one minor amendment to the bill. We would urge the deletion of the language on Page 2, lines 17-19, which – like the language being deleted on lines 22-26 – continues to refer to a March 1, 2026 sunset clause for operation of the statute. The retention of this language is confusing and should be stricken.

Thank you for considering our views.