

## **OPPOSE H 7518 – UNIFORMED CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES ACT**

**WHAT THE LEGISLATION DOES:** Eliminate the existing requirement that police obtain a warrant before accessing records in the state prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP).

**WHAT THE PDMP IS:** 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, diet pills, sleeping pills, and migraine medication. In addition, other legislation under consideration by the General Assembly may increase the prescriptions recorded, to include medications such as cough syrup and antidiarrheal medication.

**WHAT RHODE ISLAND DOES NOW:** Rhode Island is one of eighteen states that has, in recent years, required law enforcement to obtain a warrant before accessing database records. This legislation would strike that requirement.

**WHY THIS LEGISLATION IS BAD FOR RHODE ISLANDERS:** Requiring a warrant simply ensures that law enforcement is engaged in a legitimate, targeted investigation. It provides judicial oversight to ensure that police cannot, on their own and without context, look through the medication history of innocent Rhode Islanders and label them as illicit drug seekers. By requiring law enforcement to do nothing more than document they are engaged in a drug-related investigation, this legislation provides virtually limitless access to the prescription information of nearly every Rhode Islander.

Requiring a warrant for access to the database is no different than requiring a warrant to look through a person's medicine cabinet. We do not require individuals to give over their prescriptions to law enforcement on demand, and should not allow similar action just because the information exists in a centralized database.

This legislation leaves chronic pain sufferers and other ill Rhode Islanders wide open for investigation and suspicion by police, forced to prove all of their prescriptions are legitimate. It also places doctors in a fear that writing one too many prescriptions will bring the police to their doorstep, questioning the validity of medical decisions they have made.

Allowing police to rummage through these records could also undermine attempts to deal with the opioid crisis as a *medical* issue, rather than a *criminal* one, as exemplified by the state's Good Samaritan law. Will patients with addiction problems avoid requesting prescriptions from doctors because of police access to the database and seek illegal drugs instead?

If police can't prove to a court of law there's reason for them to look at Rhode Islanders' prescriptions, they shouldn't be doing so. Legitimate drug investigations can get a warrant. Rhode Islanders deserve to have their prescription information protected.

**Vote No on 7518.**