



Dear Members of the Rhode Island Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee,

We are writing to express our deep concern and a strong call to action regarding the stewardship of Rhode Island's opioid settlement funds. These resources represent not only financial restitution, but also an unprecedented opportunity to repair the harm caused by decades of opioid misuse and its devastating consequences for our communities.

Our concern is regarding the recent article published by *GoLocalProv.com* on September 14, 2025, titled "*McKee Looking to Scoop Opioid Settlement Money to Fund CharterCARE Bailout.*" According to the report, Governor McKee is considering redirecting \$10 million of Rhode Island's opioid settlement funds to help close the financial gap in the sale of CharterCARE.

As individuals and organizations actively engaged in stemming the tide of the overdose crisis, we are alarmed by any effort that may compromise the integrity, transparency, and community-centered process established for allocating these critical funds. Rhode Island has made incredible and impactful strides to ensure the opioid settlement funds are distributed equitably and thoughtfully. Any attempt to "circumvent the review process," as the article describes, would undermine both the spirit and structure of the settlement agreement.

As stewards of these dollars, your decisions will directly shape whether this settlement fulfills its intended purpose: to save lives, expand access to evidence-based care, and support lasting recovery. Every dollar should be directed toward solutions that:

- Expand low-barrier treatment and recovery supports;
- Strengthen prevention and harm reduction efforts;
- Build sustainable community-based infrastructure; and
- Address inequities that continue to deny many Rhode Islanders the care they deserve.

We fully support the expansion and preservation of treatment beds and recognize the urgent need to stabilize our behavioral health system. However, opioid settlement dollars were not designed to function as emergency financial relief for health systems, especially without proper review. Other funding streams should be pursued for this purpose. Settlement dollars must flow through the established process, with approval from the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee, as clearly required. Using these settlement funds to fill budget gaps or bail out a bankrupt hospital would be a clear misappropriation and would take critical resources away from the very communities these dollars were meant to support. To do so would betray both the intent of the settlement and the trust of the people we serve.

For many in our community, these funds represent one of the only tangible forms of justice for the thousands of Rhode Islanders lost to overdose in the past decade. When the Advisory Committee was first formed, community partners articulated this shared value in a letter that stated:

"This settlement was meant to represent some form of justice. We want justice for the unnecessary deaths of our many friends, family, co-workers, and clients who were killed by the greed and dishonesty of not only pharmaceutical companies, but others who collaborated with them in creating the conditions of the epidemic. For justice to be meaningful and substantial, it must place victims at the center—those still struggling from addiction, their families, people in recovery, and the frontline workers who work tirelessly and are collapsing in the face of the ongoing epidemic."

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to turn the tide of the opioid epidemic. We urge you to remain steadfast in upholding the principles of transparency, accountability, and justice that have thus far guided the work of the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee. The lives lost and the communities still struggling deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

Sandy Valentine, Executive Director, RICARES
Michelle McKenzie, Director, PONI
Colleen Daley Ndoye, Executive Director, Project Weber/RENEW
Eileen Hayes, CEO, Amos House
George O'Toole, Acting Director, East Bay CAP
Mike O'Neill, Senior Manager of Recovery Services, Anchor Recovery Community Center
Laura Jaworski, Executive Director, House of Hope CDC
Paul Salera, President and CEO, Westbay CAP

Eric Hirsch, Professor of Sociology Providence College, Rhode Island Homeless Advocacy Project
Marcus Mitchell, Executive Director, DARE
Paula Hudson, Executive Director, Better Lives RI

166 Valley St, Ste 105, Providence, RI 02909
office: (401) 475-2960 web: <https://ricares.org>