

January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026

To: The Honorable Peter F. Neronha, RI Attorney General  
The Honorable Daniel J. McKee, Governor

Dear Governor McKee and Attorney General Neronha,

As chair of the Rhode Island Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee (OSAC), it is my pleasure to submit this letter summarizing the activities, accomplishments, and challenges experienced by the committee over the prior calendar year (2025). I have been extraordinarily impressed by the committee's diligence, insights, and commitment to upholding the highest levels of integrity to ensure that these funds are used to save lives and improve the health and well-being of Rhode Islanders directly affected by the state's opioid and overdose crisis.

In 2025, OSAC held a total of seven public meetings. In January, the committee reviewed fatal overdose surveillance data and engaged in a productive discussion of priorities for the upcoming year. The committee also discussed its approach for reviewing applications for new OSAC members, as both one committee representative and one expert advisor ended their terms this year. At the March meeting, the committee reviewed applications for each seat, implemented a new review process, heard public comment from all applicants, and finally, voted on two new members. The committee received a total of nine applications for the community seat and 11 applications for the expert representative. After a robust discussion and executive session, OSAC voted to elect Ms. Samantha Binienda and Ms. Katie Hansen to the community and expert seats, respectively.

At the May meeting, OSAC heard from two experts who have researched opioid settlement processes across the nation. The experts praised the committee for Rhode Island's commitment to community engagement, transparency, and expediency directing the funds to communities across the state. They also encouraged the committee to consider sustainability of funding streams, and to develop explicit guidelines regarding the supplantation of opioid settlement funds. Finally, the committee heard from Ms. Cathy Schultz, who summarized the results of the Governor's Overdose Task Force community conversations and work group recommendations. As in prior years, these recommendations are critical for aligning OSAC's recommendations with both the state's strategic plan and priorities & needs expressed by community members.

In June, OSAC engaged in an in-depth discussion with staff and leadership from the three state agencies tasked with overseeing the disbursement of opioid settlement funds.

The committee received detailed information regarding opioid settlement-supported programs, progress, and challenges to date. The committee continued this discussion in July, at which a draft set of recommended allocations for fiscal year 2027 (FY27) were introduced. The committee also reviewed prior year allocations and discussed, at length, the proposed FY27 allocations, particularly considering the significantly reduced total amount of funds available in F227 compared to prior fiscal years.

A major success of the year was approving the recommended allocations for FY27, which occurred at the August meeting. The final tally was ten (10) members voting “Aye” and five (5) members voting “Nay” (with two members absent from the meeting). This vote took place after presentations focused on evaluation and metrics, several public comment periods, and a detailed discussion regarding investments made to date, considering the landscape of other federal and state funding sources supporting programs to address Rhode Island’s overdose crisis.

Our final meeting of the year occurred in October, at which we heard from a national expert—Dr. Regina Labelle—on upcoming federal policy changes and their likely impacts on people living with substance use disorder. The committee also engaged in a comprehensive discussion regarding proposed guidance for avoiding supplantation of opioid settlement funds. After debate and an impassioned public comment period, the committee voted to approve the guidance. The committee was unanimous in its belief that, under no circumstances, should supplantation of opioid settlement funds occur. Moreover, OSAC members wish to highlight that supplantation is not an approved use of funds under the legal terms set forth in the Rhode Island Opioid Settlement Agreement and Memorandum of Agreement. Furthermore, any changes to the previously approved allocations by strategy/pillar should be reviewed, discussed, and voted on by OSAC members through the established transparent, public process.

In 2026, in addition to its regular work, the committee will consider the most effective way to allocate funding from yet to be finalized settlements, including that with Perdue Pharma. The committee will also be tasked with discussing how best to allocate opioid settlement funds in the context of significant changes to the federal policy and funding landscape, which is almost certainly likely to have substantial (and negative) impacts on Rhode Islanders most affected by the state’s overdose crisis. The committee will thus face a dual challenge: continuing to support the incredible progress made to date and developing strategies to mitigate the adverse consequences of reduced federal support for people living with substance use disorder.

It is truly an exceptional honor to serve as chair of the Rhode Island Opioid Settlement Committee. I wish to thank our outstanding committee members for their service and the countless community members who have participated in our meetings and who inspire hope that, through their work, ending the overdose crisis is possible. And finally, I wish to express special thanks to the extraordinary civil servants at EOHHS whose

tireless work has meant that Rhode Island has been recognized as a national leader in the management of opioid settlement funds.

Sincerely,



Brandon DL Marshall, PhD

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CC: Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee Members  
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