

2021 -- H 6317

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

H O U S E R E S O L U T I O N

RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (EOHHS) TO CREATE A COVID-19 SURGE PLAN FOR HANDLING THE INCREASING NEED FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER TREATMENTS

Introduced By: Representatives Tanzi, Shekarchi, Amore, Cassar, Kislak, Fogarty, Shallcross Smith, Shanley, Craven, and Batista

Date Introduced: May 07, 2021

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

1 WHEREAS, The stated mission of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services
2 (EOHHS) is to ensure access to high quality and cost effective services that foster the health,
3 safety, and independence of all Rhode Islanders; and

4 WHEREAS, In October of 2020, the Rhode Island Department of Health's (RIDOH)
5 Office of State Medical Examiners (OSME) released data indicating a sharp increase in
6 accidental drug overdose deaths during the first seven months of 2020 with an increase of 26
7 percent in all fatal drug overdoses, a 33 percent increase in opioid-involved fatal overdoses, and
8 more drug overdoses occurring in July of 2020 than in any other month since the tracking of this
9 data began. This trend has progressed and intensified as the months of COVID-19 have
10 continued; and

11 WHEREAS, According to the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental
12 Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH), as of November of 2020, there had been a 15 to 20 percent
13 increase in calls from people seeking "some form of help, whether they're seeking professional
14 help, or they're just seeking peers to talk to, or they just want someone to talk to because they are
15 anxious and stressed"; and

16 WHEREAS, The stressors and isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated
17 mental health conditions, and barriers to accessing necessary care by those in need of care or
18 already using these services, have left many Rhode Islanders without the treatments and services

1 they desperately need; and

2 WHEREAS, The Director of the Division of Pediatric Hospital Medicine at Hasbro
3 Children's Hospital, has stated that he has witnessed "a massive pandemic of mentally ill
4 adolescents," many of them admitted to Hasbro Children's Hospital; and

5 WHEREAS, In addition, many of our country's and State's veterans are struggling with
6 their mental health due to increasing economic, social and financial impacts from the COVID-19
7 pandemic and require specific mental health support during the country's recovery; and

8 WHEREAS, Access to mental health support is essential in sustaining long-term recovery
9 for Rhode Islanders negatively impacted and coping with the numerous mental health challenges
10 of the COVID-19 crisis; now, therefore be it

11 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
12 respectfully requests EOHHS to create a COVID-19 surge plan for handling the increasing need
13 for behavioral health services and substance use disorder treatments; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That this House hereby requests EOHHS to submit the surge plan to the
15 House on or before June 30, 2021; and be it further

16 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
17 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Governor of the State of Rhode Island and
18 Womazetta Jones, Secretary, Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

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