

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

From: SENATOR JOHN A. CELONA

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**Contact: Senator John A. Celona: 786-3330(PAGER); 222-8640 ext. 136;
353-3042(HOME); 353-6155(FAX)**

**"Senator Celona co-sponsors
'Freedom of Choice' legislation
for pharmacy service."**

NORTH PROVIDENCE -- Fulfilling a campaign pledge, Senator John A. Celona(D-District 36) of North Providence has announced that he has co-sponsored legislation along with Senator Leonidas P. Raptakis(D-District 20) of Coventry and West Warwick that would give the people the freedom to choose the pharmacy of their choice for their prescriptions.

Senator Celona said that "it is simply unfair to the people who pay for their health care to have an HMO tell them who and where to go for their prescriptions." The North Providence legislator said that "this action is a negative double-edged sword." "First," he stated "it denies the people their right to pick and choose a pharmacy that is convenient and less-expensive and second, that policy has effectively eliminated many of the small independent pharmacies in our state because they cannot compete with the large chain stores."

Senator Celona said that he has received well over a hundred telephone calls and letters from constituents calling for their freedom. As a result, Senator Raptakis along with Senator Celona and Senator Joseph A. Montalbano(D-District 37) and Senator Catherine E. Graziano(D-District 5) have initiated this "Freedom of Choice" legislation.

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In the last session of the General Assembly, a similar measure passed the House of Representatives but died in the Senate Committee on Corporations. While in the Corporations Committee, the bill only received 4 affirmative votes with Senators Celona and Montalbano being two of the four.

"This year I will continue to work to see to it that the people have the right to go to the pharmacy of their choice, regardless of what the HMOs say or do" Senator Celona exclaimed.