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**University of Rhode Island to host Patrick J. Kennedy as Commencement Speaker May 19**  
*Kennedy to be Awarded Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters*

**Kingston, R.I. / May 19, 2019** – The University of Rhode Island will hold its 133<sup>rd</sup> Commencement on Sunday, May 19, at 12:30 p.m. on the Quadrangle of the Kingston Campus. Patrick J. Kennedy, former U.S. Representative (D-RI), lead sponsor of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, and founder of The Kennedy Forum and of DontDenyMe.org, will be the commencement speaker.

“We are honored to have former Congressman Kennedy deliver the commencement address to our graduates, their families, friends and faculty,” says URI President David M. Dooley. “His address and visit to URI could not have come at a more important time for our University community and the higher education community nationwide. Mr. Kennedy’s remarks will serve to inspire our community to build on its comprehensive efforts to address mental health services and awareness on our campuses.”

Kennedy will address an audience of approximately 15,000, including undergraduates marking commencement; their families and guests; and URI faculty and staff.

The University will award Kennedy with an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree, paying tribute to his work to end discrimination against those with mental health and substance use disorders and other brain diseases, both in Rhode Island and nationally.

Read more here: <https://today.uri.edu/news/commencement-2019-former-congressman-patrick-j-kennedy-to-address-uri-graduates-may-19/>

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**About Patrick J. Kennedy:**

Former Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy (D-R.I.) is a lifelong mental health advocate and former member of the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis. He is the founder of The Kennedy Forum, a convening think tank tackling mental health and addiction issues and co-founder of One Mind, a global leader in open science collaboration for brain research. In 2015, he co-authored A Common Struggle, a New York Times best seller, which details his personal journey and provides a roadmap for the future of mental health policy. Mr. Kennedy is pushing for full enforcement of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008. He was the lead sponsor of this groundbreaking legislation, which requires health plans cover mental health, eating disorder, and addiction care health benefits the same way they cover physical health benefits. To learn about Mr. Kennedy’s efforts, please visit [www.patrickjkennedy.net](http://www.patrickjkennedy.net).