

May 19, 2025

Representative Marvin Abney, Chair

House Committee on Finance

RI General Assembly
RI State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: Testimony in FAVOR of House Bill: H 5526: RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES-
THUNDERMIST FAMILY MEDICINE RESIDENCY PROGRAM**

*Submitted by Jeffrey Borkan, MD, PhD and Denise Coppa, PhD, APRN
CTC-RI (Care Transformation Collaborative of Rhode Island)*

Dear Chairperson Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

As co-chairs of the Care Transformation Collaborative of Rhode Island's (CTC-RI) Primary Care Workforce Taskforce, we write in strong support of the Thundermist Family Medicine Residency Program and the need for critical investment in primary care health center teaching residencies.

CTC-RI's mission is to strengthen and transform primary care to achieve better health outcomes, better patient experiences, and lower costs for Rhode Islanders. A cornerstone of this mission is ensuring a well-trained, sustainable primary care workforce. Teaching Health Centers—like the one being developed at Thundermist—directly advance this goal by training future physicians in high-quality, team-based, community settings.

Rhode Island faces a serious and growing shortage of primary care providers. By 2030, the state could face a shortfall of 200–300 clinicians, jeopardizing access to timely, preventive, and comprehensive care—especially for our most vulnerable populations. Expanding family medicine residency capacity is one of the most effective strategies to address this challenge.

The benefits of Teaching Health Centers go beyond workforce development. These programs create immediate access to care—residents begin seeing patients on day one—and drive local economic impact through job creation, community partnerships, and talent retention. Data show that when physicians train in Rhode Island, they are much more likely to stay and practice here. The Thundermist Family Medicine Residency, backed by federal funding and national accreditation, is ready to begin training the next generation of primary care physicians—Rhode Islanders serving Rhode Islanders.

Thundermist Health Center is uniquely qualified to lead this effort. With a proven track record in delivering innovative, patient-centered care and advancing health equity, Thundermist has

already made significant investments to launch this residency. Embedding physician training within Federally Qualified Health Centers ensures new doctors are prepared to meet the complex needs of diverse communities and work effectively in integrated, value-based care models.

This opportunity is urgent. Without state funding to match federal support, Rhode Island risks losing this critical investment and the residency itself. That would mean forfeiting millions in federal dollars and undermining years of collaborative planning and development.

We urge you to support this essential initiative. By investing in the Thundermist Family Medicine Residency and Rhode Island's first Teaching Health Center, you will help ensure that high-quality, accessible, and equitable primary care remains the foundation of our state's health system.

Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to building a healthier Rhode Island.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Borkan, MD, PhD



Denise Coppa, PhD, APRN