

Testimony of Dr. Nithin Paul

Director, Social Determinants of Health Curriculum

H 5526 - Thundermist Family Medicine Residency Program – Support

Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Dr. Nithin Paul, and I serve as the Director of the Social Determinants of Health Curriculum for the Thundermist Family Medicine Residency Program. I am writing in enthusiastic support H 5526, which proposes support for this innovative and mission-driven program. The residency program is uniquely designed to train the next generation of physicians to not only stay and provide much needed primary care for our communities here in Rhode Island, but to also understand and address the root causes of health disparities in Rhode Island.

As part of their required training, residents will engage directly with the communities we serve—particularly in Woonsocket and surrounding areas—to complete longitudinal projects focused on a clearly identified community health need. These projects are not theoretical exercises. They are structured to integrate with their primary care training to produce meaningful, sustainable interventions that improve health outcomes long after a resident's training has ended. In this way, the residency program is not only educating physicians but also building lasting infrastructure for healthier communities.

In addition, our Social Determinants of Health rotation pairs residents with physicians who are nationally recognized for their work in HIV care, Hepatitis C treatment, and Medication Assisted Treatment for substance use disorders. These clinical experiences ground residents in the realities of caring for patients who face overlapping challenges—homelessness, food insecurity, mental health needs, and addiction. There is much evidence that physicians are more likely to stay and work in the communities in which they receive their residency training, and our goal is to ensure that they feel comfortable and inspired to continue this work in Rhode Island for the long-run. The rotation emphasizes both clinical excellence and a deep understanding of systemic inequities that shape the health of individuals and communities alike.

Our goal is to graduate physicians who don't just prescribe medications—but who know how to use their expertise and connection with their patients to advocate for housing, fight for access, and build partnerships with community organizations to create lasting change. At a time when healthcare systems across the country are struggling to respond to the needs of vulnerable populations, this residency program offers a blueprint for how we can do better—starting right here in Rhode Island.

I urge you to support this program by passing H 5526. It is not just a medical training initiative—it is a powerful engine for community transformation.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to advancing health equity.

Respectfully,

Dr. Nithin Paul, M.D., M.P.H.

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Thundermist Family Medicine Residency Program
Dual-boarded Family Medicine & Preventive Medicine