

May 20, 2025

**Testimony in Support of House Bill No. 5526**

*Dr. Aaron M. Brug*

*Director, Pediatrics Curriculum*

*Thundermist Family Medicine Residency Program*

Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Dr. Aaron Brug, and I serve as the Director of the Pediatrics Curriculum for the Thundermist Family Medicine Residency Program. **I offer my full support for H5526 which provides the continuation and funding of this essential training program, which will directly address the healthcare needs of families in Rhode Island and provide a long-term solution to Rhode Island's primary care crisis.**

As a Rhode Island pediatrician, I experience daily reminders about the state's primary care crisis. It's common for parents to tell me that they travel long distances and wait long periods for their child to get much needed healthcare. Children with uncontrolled asthma become dependent on the emergency room for treatment. Kids with developmental disorders like Autism go undiagnosed. The problem is projected to only get worse with the rate of pediatrician retirements far outpacing the state's recruitment of new providers.

At Thundermist Health Centers we want to be part of the solution. We've built an ACGME accredited family medicine residency program. **All we need is the necessary funding to start recruiting and training physicians to care for Rhode Islanders for generations to come.**

As the program's Director of Pediatric Curriculum, I've worked with the other faculty to build a curriculum that, emphasizes pediatric care across the developmental spectrum—from newborns to adolescents—and provides residents with the tools they need to manage both acute and preventive care in the context of the family and community. Importantly, these physicians will be trained not just in clinical excellence, but also in cultural humility, trauma-informed care, and health equity.

At Thundermist, we are creating a pipeline of physicians who will stay and serve in the very communities where the pediatric workforce is most strained. Our residents learn alongside pediatricians, family physicians, behavioral health clinicians, and community health workers in a fully integrated model of care that prepares them to meet the needs of underserved children.

Investing in this residency is an investment in the health and future of Rhode Island's children. These are the providers who will ensure that every child—regardless of zip code—has access to a compassionate, skilled, and trusted medical home.

Thank you for your time and your support of this vital program.

Sincerely,

**Aaron M Brug MD FAAP**

Director, Pediatrics Curriculum

Thundermist Family Medicine Residency Program