

**Testimony to the Rhode Island House Committee on Finance
In Support of the Thundermist Family Medicine Residency Program
Submitted by Paul George, MD, MHPE
Residency Director, Thundermist Family Medicine Residency Program**

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Paul George, and I have spent my entire life and career in Rhode Island. I grew up in Newport, graduated from Rogers High School, and have dedicated myself to caring for Rhode Islanders as a family physician, teacher, and leader. Today, I am proud to serve as the Residency Director for the Thundermist Family Medicine Residency Program, and I am here to ask for your support for an investment that will profoundly shape the future of healthcare in our state.

Every day at Thundermist, we see patients whose lives are shaped not just by illness, but by barriers to care such as housing instability, food insecurity, transportation challenges, and behavioral health needs. These patients deserve physicians who understand their lives beyond the exam room and who are trained to advocate for better, healthier communities. That is exactly the kind of physician the Thundermist Family Medicine Residency will produce.

Our state urgently needs them. Rhode Island is projected to face a shortage of nearly 100 primary care providers by 2030. Only 44% of family physicians trained in Rhode Island between 2011 and 2017 chose to stay here to practice. Meanwhile, nationally, 55% of Teaching Health Center (THC) graduates remain in the state where they train. Our THC graduates will serve the communities and populations that need them most.

At Thundermist, our residents will receive rigorous training not only in outpatient and hospital medicine but also in community health, behavioral health integration, and the real-world social determinants that shape health. Each resident will complete a longitudinal project tackling a key social determinant partnering with local organizations to create a lasting impact in the communities they serve. We are not just teaching them to treat disease; we are teaching them to heal communities.

But this vision is at risk. The cost to train a resident in a Teaching Health Center is approximately \$230,000 per year. Federal funding currently covers only \$160,000 per resident. Without state support to bridge this critical gap, we risk losing the opportunity to grow a generation of physicians committed to Rhode Island's future.

An investment in the Thundermist Family Medicine Residency is an investment in the health, strength, and equity of our state. It is an opportunity to build a healthcare workforce that is rooted in Rhode Island, trained for Rhode Island, and committed to Rhode Island.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued commitment to the people of our state.

Sincerely,

Paul George, MD, MHPE
Residency Director
Thundermist Family Medicine Residency Program