

Rhode Island House of Representatives  
Chairman Marvin Abney

House Finance Committee  
State House  
Providence, Rhode Island

RE: Support for Restoring Funding – Department of Health Tuberculosis (TB) Clinic

Chair Abney and Members of the Committee:

My name is Calli Dogon, and I am an infectious disease physician at Brown University Health in Providence, RI. I provide medical care for patients at the RISE tuberculosis clinic.

I am writing to urge the Committee to restore funding for the Rhode Island Department of Health Tuberculosis (TB) Clinic.

### **Why this matters to me and my work**

Tuberculosis remains one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases, yet it is also one that can be cured when patients have access to the right care and coordinated treatment. Controlling tuberculosis is fundamentally a public health effort that depends on close collaboration between clinicians, communities and the Department of Health. The RISE TB Clinic is the cornerstone of that in Rhode Island.

The clinic provides specialized care to patients living with tuberculosis in a safe and supportive setting outside of the hospital. It is a place where patients can receive treatment, careful monitoring and coordinated care for their close contacts including; testing and treatment for family members including children who may have been exposed.

The RISE clinic serves as the central hub for tuberculosis care in Rhode Island and works in close partnership with RIDOH, which is essential for successful TB control. As a physician specializing in infectious diseases, I work closely with patients receiving TB treatment or patients being evaluated for such. I am also part of the medical team that collaborates with RIDOH to help coordinate care, ensure treatment adherence and support the contact investigations that are critical to preventing further transmission.

This work matters to me because tuberculosis is curable. When care is coordinated effectively, we not only heal individual patients; we can also prevent the spread of disease within families and close contacts and across communities.

### **Impact if the clinic is eliminated**

If the clinic were eliminated the impact could be devastating. Care for these patients would likely shift either to hospital settings; resulting in substantially higher healthcare costs or to already overburdened primary care practices and community health centers across Rhode Island. Many of these practices are already operating with limited staffing and resources.

Without the centralized structure provided by the RISE clinic, care would become fragmented. Coordination with RIDOH would become significantly more difficult, particularly for contact tracing, treatment monitoring and follow up. As a result, we would likely see increased transmission in the community.

The RISE clinic is not only a critical hub for tuberculosis care in Rhode Island; it also provides a supportive and trusted environment for patients and their families, many of whom come from vulnerable communities and face barriers to accessing healthcare.

### **A patient or system example**

In my clinical experience, we cared for a patient with active tuberculosis of the lungs that also had involvement of his hand, requiring multiple visits with orthopedic hand specialists. The patient was Spanish speaking and required extensive coordination of care.

Beyond specialist care, the patient needed transportation assistance and monitoring on treatment. Managing this case required extensive collaboration and involvement by numerous parties. This level of multidisciplinary collaboration was possible because of the centralized structure provided by the RISE TB Clinic and its close partnership with RIDOH.

As a physician, it is a privilege to witness the work of a clinic that is so compassionate, organized and effective in treating and preventing tuberculosis in Rhode Island. **The RISE TB Clinic is not just a clinic it is a vital part of a public health mission!!!**

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to restore funding for the TB clinic and ensure Rhode Island maintains the capacity to manage tuberculosis effectively and protect public health.

Sincerely,

Calli Dogon, MD

Infectious Disease

Brown University Health

Providence, Rhode Island