

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 Gasper Gasperlin. I am an anesthesiologist in Providence, Rhode Island.

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

Our state's TB Clinic provides essential clinical expertise and care coordination which supports both patients as well as health care providers across Rhode Island. Tuberculosis care is complex. As such, our state's TB providers are experts in the science of TB treatment as well as highly skilled in facilitating the details of extensive care coordination.

Tuberculosis impacts ripple throughout the entire hospital when cases arise. Without access to appropriate care and treatment of both active and latent tuberculosis, I worry that outbreaks will become increasingly prevalent which may lead to increasing tuberculosis cases, poor patient outcomes, delayed care, and exposure to staff.

In anesthesia, we are at high risk for exposure to airborne illnesses by the nature of our practice. Exposure cases to tuberculosis put the entire operative staff at risk for this life-threatening illness including surgeons, operative nurses, technicians, housekeepers, and more. While we currently have appropriate monitoring after exposure and treatment for latent cases, with the loss of this funding, we would be losing our ability to treat these cases locally. This would lead directly to not only poorer care for those exposed in healthcare but poorer care for any patients who require procedures or surgery in the state of Rhode Island as we already have extensive ongoing staffing and scheduling challenges. Everything from routine colonoscopy to urgent trauma surgeries would be impacted.

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,

Gasper Gasperlin DO
Warwick, RI