

Statement from the Infection Control Professionals of Southern New England

RE: Support of Continued Funding for the RISE TB Clinic and Critical Public Health Services

Chair Abney and Members of the Committee:

Our names are Heidi Mikkelsen-McCabe and Steven Leblanc, Co-Presidents of the **Infection Control Professionals of Southern New England**, representing a broad coalition of infection preventionists, clinicians, epidemiologists, and public health partners across our region.

I represent our organization and we wish to express our **strong support for the continued funding of the RISE Tuberculosis (TB) Clinic** and other essential public health programs that have been proposed for defunding in the current state budget.

The **RISE TB Clinic** is Rhode Island's **state-funded referral clinic** for the evaluation, management, and treatment of both **active tuberculosis disease and latent TB infection**. It functions through a longstanding partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Health. The clinic provides specialty consultation, expert clinical care, and crucial public health oversight for individuals with confirmed or suspected tuberculosis, as well as those exposed and at high risk of developing disease.

[\[health.ri.gov\]](http://health.ri.gov)

TB control is not theoretical. It is a daily, proactive effort that prevents outbreaks, protects the public, and ensures that individuals receive timely and appropriate care. One hallmark of Rhode Island's TB program is **Directly Observed Therapy (DOT)**—the gold standard for TB disease management—in which outreach workers administer every dose of medication to ensure treatment completion and early detection of complications. This program is fully integrated with the RISE Clinic and is foundational in preventing transmission and reducing long-term healthcare costs associated with uncontrolled TB. [\[health.ri.gov\]](http://health.ri.gov)

Furthermore, the RISE Clinic provides critical services to **pediatric and adult patients alike**, including high-risk individuals who may otherwise fall through the cracks of the healthcare system. Outreach workers meet patients immediately following hospitalization, escorting them into care and supporting them through complex treatment regimens. These interventions dramatically reduce the risk of community spread and protect workplaces, schools, healthcare settings, and families.

[\[brownhealth.org\]](http://brownhealth.org)

In addition to direct clinical care, the RISE Clinic plays an essential role in supporting statewide TB elimination efforts. The Rhode Island Department of Health's TB Program—funded in part through federal cooperative agreements—explicitly identifies collaboration with the RISE Clinic as central to achieving outcomes such as reducing TB incidence, increasing health equity, advancing diagnostic capacity, and improving provider education. [\[taggs.hhs.gov\]](http://taggs.hhs.gov)

Defunding or destabilizing the RISE TB Clinic would weaken a core pillar of Rhode Island's infectious disease infrastructure. It would also undermine decades of progress in TB control, jeopardize federal partnerships, and shift preventable costs back into emergency departments, hospitals, and congregate settings where the risk of transmission is greatest. As we learned repeatedly throughout the pandemic and recent public health funding reductions, eliminating or diminishing prevention programs ultimately results in **far higher costs—financially, clinically, and socially**.

We also urge the Committee to maintain funding for other public health programs facing reductions. Budget analyses for FY2026 highlight increased fiscal pressure on health and human services and insufficient long-term investment in critical public health capabilities. These structural vulnerabilities make it even more important to preserve the state's core prevention infrastructure and avoid cuts that would widen current gaps in infectious disease preparedness. [[rhodeislan...urrent.com](https://rhodeislandcurrent.com)]

Infection prevention is a cost-saving strategy. The services provided by RISE and other public health programs prevent hospitalizations, reduce transmission, and protect some of our most vulnerable residents. Rhode Island's healthcare system cannot absorb additional preventable disease burden without significant downstream consequences.

On behalf of the Infection Control Professionals of Southern New England, we respectfully urge the Committee to **fully restore and sustain funding** for:

- The **RISE TB Clinic**,
- Directly Observed Therapy (DOT) outreach services,
- And other key public health infrastructure at risk in the current budget.

These programs are essential, evidence-based, and irreplaceable in maintaining the safety and health of Rhode Island's communities.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued commitment to protecting public health in our state. We are grateful for your partnership and stand ready to support your efforts in any way we can.

Sincerely,

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Co-Presidents

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