

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

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jessica Parmentier, and I'm the full-time nurse at the RISE Tuberculosis Clinic in Providence, RI. I am writing to urge the Committee to restore funding for the Rhode Island Department of Health Tuberculosis (TB) Clinic.

This June marks 20 years that I've worked at The Miriam Hospital, 13 of those years dedicated to the TB Clinic. Like many nurses stepping into a new role, I was apprehensive at first. I wasn't sure I was making the right decision, but it didn't take long to realize it was exactly where I was meant to be.

Tuberculosis care is unlike anything else. At RISE, we don't just treat a disease, we care for people. Our patients are often navigating not only fear and stigma, but uncertainty about their health, financial strain, and overwhelming isolation that comes with the diagnosis. Tuberculosis requires long-term, highly specialized care, but what makes the difference is how we deliver that care. We meet patients with compassion, patience, and respect. We spend hours teaching, listening, and building real relationships with our patients, because without that trust, treatment doesn't work.

I'd like to share a few stories of the impact the RISE Clinic has had on the community. The first case that comes to mind is when we treated four members of the same family. It began with the granddaughter, and as we continued evaluating the family, it became clear that her grandfather was the source. Soon after, two more of his grandchildren were also diagnosed. For the family it was incredibly overwhelming- multiple loved ones facing a serious illness at the same time, each needing treatment, monitoring, and support. It was a difficult and emotional experience, and it highlighted just how crucial it is to have a dedicated team providing guidance, support, and care every step of the way.

One of our patients in his early 30s came to us with active TB, something that had already impacted his family years earlier when his father was treated. Seeing the disease come full circle in one family was a powerful reminder that TB has not disappeared and that our work remains essential.

We've cared for people from all walks of life, including a financial advisor, someone who doesn't fit the stereotype of a TB patient. I remember him asking me if he had "consumption" because that was the only term he knew. Like so many, he had no idea tuberculosis still existed.

And one of my favorite patients, who on his final day of treatment arrived wearing a suit, something we had never seen before as he had always come in dressed casually. It was clear this was a special day for him, a proud moment marking how far he had come. Dressing up was his way of honoring the work we do. It was a simple gesture that spoke volumes.

These stories are only a small glimpse into the lives we touch. Our staff collectively has over 100 years of service dedicated to this work. One hundred years of expertise, compassion, and commitment that cannot simply be replaced or rebuilt if the clinic is defunded.

I am proud of the care we provide, proud of the team I work with, and grateful to advocate for our clinic today.

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,
Jessica Parmentier
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