

To: Rhode Island House of Representatives

Chairman Marvin Abney

House Finance Committee, State House

Providence, RI

From: Mary Ellen Casey, MSN, RN, M.Ed., CIC

Date: March 22, 2026

Subject: Support for Restoring Funding for RIDOH TB Clinic Services

Chair Abney and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mary Ellen Casey, and I am a registered nurse, Infection Preventionist and former employee health nurse at a RI community hospital from West Greenwich, RI.

I am submitting this testimony to strongly urge you to restore funding for the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) Tuberculosis (TB) Clinic. In my role as Employee Health nurse, I frequently referred employees to the TB clinic for further evaluation and treatment. The TB clinic served as a resource for me providing evidence-based guidance for TB questions, referrals, and coordination of care. Without a doubt, the TB clinic contributed to the effectiveness of our TB program and supported the health and safety of our staff and patients.

The RIDOH TB Clinic provides critical, specialized care that cannot be easily replicated in primary care settings. These services include:

- **Directly Observed Therapy (DOT):** Ensuring patients complete their medication regimen, which prevents the development of drug-resistant TB.
- **Screening and Testing:** Identifying latent TB infections to prevent future active cases.
- **Contact Investigation:** Rapidly tracing contacts of active cases to halt community transmission.
- **Specialized Care:** Treating complex TB cases and latent infections, particularly in high-risk populations.

Funding for these services is not just healthcare spending; it is a vital public health investment.

- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Treating a latent TB infection is significantly less expensive than treating a single active, contagious case.

- **Community Safety:** Adequate funding ensures that RIDOH can act quickly to manage active cases, preventing outbreaks in schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods.
- **Health Equity:** The TB clinic serves vulnerable populations, including immigrants, refugees, and individuals with underlying health conditions, ensuring all Rhode Islanders have access to TB services regardless of ability to pay.

The TB clinic is essential for maintaining a healthy Rhode Island. Reducing funding for these services would pose a serious risk to our public health infrastructure. I respectfully request that you fully fund the RIDOH TB Clinic in the upcoming budget.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to the health of our community.

Sincerely,

Mary Ellen Casey, MSN, RN, M.Ed., CIC

Infection Preventionist

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