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The Honorable Marvin Abney
Rhode Island House of Representatives
House Finance Committee
(Submitted electronically via HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov)

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee:

Please accept the Rhode Island Health Center Association's letter of **support** for **House Bill 7588**, which recognizes the vital role of the Thundermist Family Medicine Residency Program in addressing Rhode Island's primary care workforce shortage, especially in underserved and rural communities.

This residency will train family physicians in community-based settings, improving access to primary care and increasing the likelihood that graduates remain in Rhode Island. The program represents the most sustainable, fiscally responsible strategy to strengthen the state's primary care workforce for decades to come.

We are thankful for the General Assembly's leadership and the bill's sponsors in recognizing that community-based graduate medical education is a proven, long-term strategy to expand access to primary care and retain physicians in Rhode Island. The Thundermist residency program represents a fiscally responsible, high-impact investment aligned with these goals.

We respectfully ask you to consider a targeted amendment to HB7588 to better leverage state resources and address funding limitations within the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP), which the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) has determined cannot be used to support resident salaries.

As drafted, HB7588 provides an ongoing annual appropriation of \$500,000. In SFY27, this poses no funding gap, as there are no resident salaries. However, in future years, particularly as the program grows and RHTP funds expire in 2031, the state should pursue federal Medicaid Graduate Medical Education (GME) funding, a widely used mechanism in forty-four states. Accessing Medicaid GME requires EOHHS to submit a Medicaid State Plan Amendment (SPA) to CMS, and legislative direction is needed to initiate this process.

Accordingly, we request that HB7588 be amended to require EOHHS to submit a SPA during FY27 and authorize Medicaid GME funding beginning in FY28 to support residency training at Rhode Island Federally Qualified Health Centers operating ACGME-accredited, primary care residency programs, including the Thundermist Family Medicine Residency.

With this amendment, HB7588 would affirm legislative support for the Thundermist Family Medicine Residency Program while establishing a durable, federally supported financing pathway to ensure the program's long-term success.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to strengthening Rhode Island's primary care workforce.

Sincerely,

M Campbell

Melissa Campbell
Policy Manager

The Rhode Island Health Center Association members include:
Blackstone Valley Community Health Care Inc. ~ Comprehensive Community Action Program
East Bay Community Action Program ~ Providence Community Health Centers
Thundermist Health Center ~ Tri-County Community Action Agency
WellOne Primary Medical and Dental Care ~ Wood River Health