

My name is Dr. Renee Eger. I am the Director of the Midlife Care Center at Women & Infants Hospital, and I am here today in support of House Bill H8245.

The focus of my ObGyn practice is the care of perimenopausal and menopausal women. Menopause marks the permanent end of estrogen production and occurs, on average, at age 51. The transition leading up to it—perimenopause—can last up to 10 years.

More than 75% of women experience symptoms such as hot flashes and night sweats. Many also suffer from sleep disruption, mood changes, memory difficulties often described as “brain fog,” joint pain, weight gain, and sexual health concerns.

This is not a niche issue. It affects every woman who lives long enough.

At the Midlife Care Center, we see firsthand how these symptoms impact daily life. Women describe struggling in their roles as parents, partners, caregivers, and employees. These challenges are not minor—they affect relationships, productivity, and overall well-being.

The workplace impact is significant. Research shows increased absenteeism and presenteeism among women experiencing these symptoms. A 2024 report estimated this costs the U.S. economy \$1.8 billion annually.

I want to thank you for your leadership in passing House Bill 6161 in 2025, which amended the Fair Employment Practices Act to protect employees experiencing menopause. That was an important step forward and we are all proud that Rhode Island was the first state in the nation to pass such legislation.

House Bill H8245 is the next step.

We have strong medical evidence supporting the use of estrogen therapy for treating hot flashes and night sweats. It is highly effective, reducing symptoms by up to 75–80%, and for many patients, it is truly life-changing.

While earlier studies raised concerns about safety, we now know that for appropriately selected patients, the benefits of estrogen therapy far outweigh the risks.

The passage of this bill will ensure that every individual covered by a health plan shall be reimbursed for the cost of prescription hormone therapy for up to a year at a time. Currently some patients experience a lack of coverage for this medication. In addition, patients often need to make monthly trips to the pharmacy, not to mention monthly co-pays, presenting an additional burden.

Passing H8245 will help ensure that women have access to safe, effective treatment during a universal and often disruptive stage of life.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.