

April 7, 2026

Senator Melissa Murray
Chair, Senate Committee on Health & Human Services
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Senator Murray and Members of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services,

I am the Director of the Midlife Care Center at Women & Infants Hospital, and I write today in strong support of Senate Bill S2863.

My clinical practice as an obstetrician-gynecologist is dedicated to the care of perimenopausal and menopausal women. Menopause—the permanent end of ovarian estrogen production—occurs, on average, at age 51. The transition leading up to it, known as perimenopause, can last up to a decade and is often marked by significant and disruptive symptoms.

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

This is not a niche issue—it is a universal one. Every woman who lives long enough will experience menopause, and for many, the symptoms are substantial.

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

The economic consequences are also significant. Menopause-related symptoms contribute to increased absenteeism and presenteeism in the workplace. A 2024 analysis estimated that these effects cost the U.S. economy approximately \$1.8 billion annually. Supporting effective treatment is not only a health priority—it is an economic one.

I also want to acknowledge and thank you for your leadership in passing Senate Bill 361 in 2025, which amended the Fair Employment Practices Act to protect employees experiencing menopause. That legislation positioned Rhode Island as a national leader. Senate Bill S2863 represents the logical and necessary next step.

We now have strong, well-established medical evidence supporting the use of estrogen therapy as the most effective treatment for vasomotor symptoms. It can reduce hot flashes and night sweats by 75–80%, and for many patients, it is truly life-changing. While earlier studies raised concerns about safety, current evidence makes clear that, for appropriately selected patients, the benefits of hormone therapy outweigh the risks.

However, access remains a critical barrier.

Many patients face real challenges in obtaining their medications consistently. Individuals in rural areas, those with limited transportation, and patients with physical limitations often struggle to make frequent trips to the pharmacy. Even in urban settings, weather events—as we saw this past winter—can disrupt access. When patients are required to refill prescriptions frequently, gaps in treatment are common.

These interruptions are not benign. When hormone therapy is inconsistent, patients often experience a rapid return of severe symptoms. Irregular use can also lead to abnormal uterine bleeding, which may necessitate additional diagnostic procedures—procedures that are not only costly, but also stressful and avoidable with uninterrupted care.

Senate Bill S2863 addresses this problem directly by ensuring that individuals covered by a health plan can be reimbursed for up to a full year of prescribed hormone therapy at one time. This is a simple, practical solution that reduces barriers, improves adherence, and promotes continuity of care.

In doing so, this bill supports better health outcomes, reduces unnecessary medical interventions, and helps women remain fully engaged in their work, families, and communities.

Passing Senate Bill S2863 is an opportunity to build on Rhode Island's leadership and to ensure that women have reliable access to safe, effective treatment during a universal and often disruptive stage of life.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Renee R Eger, MD, FACOG, MSCP

Director, Midlife Care Center
Women & Infants Hospital
118 Dudley Street
Providence, RI 02905