



May 7, 2024

The Honorable Robert E. Craven
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

My name is Jaye Watts. I am a licensed independent clinical social worker and the director of the Trans Health Program at Thundermist Health Center. I am proud to testify on behalf of Thundermist in strong support of H8155.

Thundermist is a Federally Qualified Community Health Center with locations in Woonsocket, West Warwick, and South County. Thundermist serves over 62,000 people, that's 1 in 18 Rhode Islanders, with patients who come from every zip code in our state. In 2015, Thundermist became the first community health center in Rhode Island to establish a dedicated program for Trans Health that presently serves over 2,100 people.

Thundermist's mission is to improve the health of our patients and communities by delivering exceptional health care, removing barriers to that care, and advancing healthy lifestyles. As the largest provider of primary care for transgender people in Rhode Island, we know how essential it is for the well-being of transgender people to have identity documents that match who they are.

Since our program's inception, we have heard from our patients that the current name change process poses significant barriers. The most consequential is the practice of public notice required in most jurisdictions. There is a web of probate court processes and costs due to publication resulting in fees that range from \$35 to over \$150 depending on location. In addition to the cost differences, of particular concern for transgender individuals is that publication requires that they out themselves to anyone who reads the notice which also includes the person's home address. This practice raises safety concerns for all individuals, some of whom delay accessing this vital service due to the potential for real harm.

This bill will address those concerns and allow more people safe and affordable access to the name change process. On behalf of Thundermist Health Center, I urge you to pass H 8155.

Sincerely,

Jaye Watts, LICSW
Director, Trans Health Program

WOONSOCKET

Medical

450 Clinton St.
Woonsocket, RI 02895

Phone: 401-767-4100
Fax: 401-235-6896

Dental & WIC

25 John A. Cummings Way
Woonsocket, RI 02895

Dental Phone: 401-767-4161
Dental Fax: 401-767-5441

WIC Phone: 401-767-4109
WIC Fax: 401-235-6883

WEST WARWICK

Medical

186 Providence St.
West Warwick, RI 02893

Phone: 401-615-2800
Fax: 401-615-2805

Dental

5 Washington St.
West Warwick, RI 02893

Phone: 401-615-2804
Fax: 401-352-6248

SOUTH COUNTY

Medical & Dental

1 River St.
Wakefield, RI 02879

Phone: 401-783-0523
Fax: 401-783-9448

Dental Phone: 401-783-5646
Dental Fax: 401-284-2081

Pediatrics

360 Kingstown Rd.
Suite 101
Narragansett, RI 02882

Phone: 401-789-6492
Fax: 401-783-9448