



RHODE ISLAND MEDICAL SOCIETY

Chairperson Robert Craven
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

H 5179

February 4, 2025

SUPPORT

Dear Chairperson Craven:

The Rhode Island Medical Society would like to thank Representative Finkleman for introducing H 5179, An Act Relating to Courts and Civil Procedure – Procedure Generally – Judgments, Orders, And Decrees. The bill will amend calculations of interest in civil actions a rate determined by average accepted auction price for last auction of 52-week U.S. treasury bills.

Rhode Island stands at a crossroads, with prejudgment interest rates among the highest nationwide. This status quo places an undue burden on healthcare providers, elevates malpractice insurance costs, and creates a legal environment that disincentivizes the timely settlement of claims. The ripple effects of this situation extend far beyond the courtroom, impacting the very fabric of our healthcare system and, most importantly, patient access to necessary care.

The financial strain imposed by these inflated rates is not just a number on a balance sheet; it translates into real-world consequences for healthcare accessibility and quality. As malpractice costs soar, providers may be forced to scale back services or relocate, leaving patients with fewer options and longer waits for care. Moreover, the current system's tendency to drag out litigation hampers swift resolution of disputes, delaying justice for all parties involved.

Reducing prejudgment interest rates is not merely a fiscal adjustment; it's a necessary step towards a more equitable, efficient, and patient-centered healthcare system. Such a measure would encourage quicker settlements, alleviate the pressure on our judicial system, and lower the operational costs for healthcare providers. Ultimately, this would enable a more robust allocation of resources towards patient care, enhancing the availability and quality of services across the state.

We urge you to support this bill, recognizing it as a pivotal opportunity to rectify a system that currently works to the detriment of both healthcare providers and patients. By voting in favor of reducing prejudgment interest rates, you will be championing a more just and sustainable framework for resolving legal disputes, one that prioritizes the health and welfare of Rhode Island's residents.

Founded in 1812, the Rhode Island Medical Society (RIMS) is the eighth oldest medical society in the country. RIMS is the vehicle by which the medical community in Rhode Island meets the evolving challenges of medical practice and quality patient care.

Please let us know if we can provide any additional information or if you have any questions on our testimony. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kara Stavros, MD
President