

September 16, 2020



Amy Katzen
Senior Policy Analyst
RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Amy.Katzen.ctr@ohhs.ri.gov

Dear Ms. Katzen:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Health System Transformation Project Social Determinants of Health Investment Strategy.

Thundermist is proud to be the backbone agency of two highly successful HEZs and to be a participant in a third HEZ. We believe in the HEZ model and are eager to see how the HEZs can continue to make meaningful impacts on the health of individuals and communities.

From our role as a backbone agency, we are unsure of how the AEs can best partner with the HEZs. Many AEs are statewide. This is a challenge with a HEZ model that is geographically limited. We believe it will take further consideration to determine the best way to achieve alignment so as not to overburden the AEs, the HEZs, or the partner agencies. We are also concerned about the duplication of efforts.

From our role as a community health provider and HEZ partner agency, we are concerned about additional funding being distributed thru the HEZs into the community. While we agree that community input is imperative to health equity, we are concerned about the unintended conflicts of interest that are created when the backbone agency is also an agency seeking funding from the HEZ. We are also concerned about the conflicts that may be created between other partner agencies. We believe this warrants further consideration and discussion.

We believe the AEs have potential to improve the health of and reduce total cost of care for attributed members. We also recognize that the AEs are still under development. Reallocation of significant funding to the AEs instead of directly to Thundermist for frontline activities to address social determinants of health feels premature. Should funding go directly to the AEs, we would hope for a guarantee of level or increased funding through this funding mechanism to protect our service delivery and access for patients.

Thank you for your consideration of our feedback. Should you have any questions, please contact me at jeannel@thundermisthealth.org. We look forward to continued collaboration between the AEs, the HEZs, and EOHHS to best address health equity and social determinants of health into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeanne LaChance". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeanne LaChance
President/Chief Executive Officer