

# Rhode Island Chapter

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American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



May 15, 2024

Support for H7902 and H7903

Dear Chairman Abney and RI House Finance Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to speak in strong support of H7902 and H7903.

I am a pediatrician, a professor of pediatrics at Brown University and medical director of The Care Transformation Collaborative of RI. I also have the honor of serving on the board of directors for the American Academy of Pediatrics. I have practiced primary care pediatrics and taught medical students and residents in Rhode Island for the past 35 years.

Primary Care is crucial to an affordable effective health care system- primary care improves health and contributes to longer lives, it also keeps the cost of care down by preventing illness, by early detection and early intervention with illness, and with coordinated disease management.

Primary Care in our state is at a critical crossroads. We must invest in our primary care workforce now or very soon will have no primary care available to Rhode Islanders. Already, access to primary care doctors is limited. Finding a primary care provider is very difficult and many of us live in fear of having our primary care doctors retire or leave medicine or leave RI. AS a pediatrician, finding a primary care practice to graduate our adolescents and young adults into is nearly impossible, many pediatricians hold onto their patients well past childhood and adolescence.

Many pediatric practices are not taking new patients and many others are only taking newborns. It is very difficult to find a pediatrician for patients new to the state or moving from another practice. A survey done by RIAAP in 2018, revealed that more than 50% of the state's pediatricians planned on retiring within 10 years.

The reasons for this crisis are complex. They are the result of longstanding policies, practices, and problematic pedagogy. Long standing undervaluing of primary care compared to subspecialty or surgical care by public and private payers, large disparities across states in how primary care providers are paid, and the enormous cost of a medical education, resulting huge educational debt. This debt precludes the ability to choose a primary care career. We will not correct them overnight, but we must start to take important steps now to avert a further crisis.

These two bills H7902 and H7903 begin to address the crisis. Bill H7903 makes scholarships available to those willing to return to RI or stay in RI and practice primary care here. Bill H7902 pays primary care practices to educate students and residents in primary care. Both of these steps are important immediate steps to build a primary care workforce for our state.

We urge you to support primary care for the sake of all Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

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Clinical Director Care Transformation Collaborative of RI  
Professor of Pediatrics W. Alpert Medical School Brown University

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