



RHODE ISLAND MEDICAL SOCIETY

Honorable Marvin Abney Chair
House Finance Committee Room
35
State House Providence,
RI 02903

Re: 24HB-8078 and 8079

SUPPORT (FOR)

May 1, 2024

Dear Chairman Abney,

The Rhode Island Medical Society is deeply concerned with the significant shortage of healthcare professionals in essential areas such as primary care, behavioral health, and nursing—a situation that severely limits access to healthcare and undermines quality in underserved regions.

In response to this crisis, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been proactive participants in the public/private partnership convened by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. Our engagement underscores our dedication to effective and sustainable healthcare workforce solutions.

We strongly advocate for the expansion of the health professional loan repayment program (H-8079). This crucial initiative helps attract and retain healthcare professionals in underserved areas by alleviating the financial burden of their education. It is a pivotal strategy for improving access to healthcare and enriching the diversity of practitioners who reflect the communities they serve.

Furthermore, we support the Ladders to Licensure grant program (H-8078), which enables paraprofessionals to advance their careers by pursuing higher education and professional licensure while continuing to work. This program effectively utilizes the existing diverse paraprofessional workforce to address gaps in healthcare services.

The Rhode Island Medical Society urges the House to pass both H-8079 and H-8078. These programs are essential for building a capable, diverse, and enduring healthcare workforce that is well-equipped to address the healthcare needs of Rhode Islanders across the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heather Smith".

Heather Smith, MD, MPH
President