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Testimony Re: H-5076, Article 8, Section 8  
House Finance Committee  
March 5th, 2025  
Michaela Carroll, Health Policy Associate



Rhode Island KIDS COUNT coordinates the Right from the Start Campaign, a state policy coalition led by eight organizations to advance state policies and budget priorities that help babies and young children get off to the right start.

**Both Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the Right from the Start Campaign strongly support the Governor's Budget Proposal in Article 8, Section 8 of House Bill 5076, to include primary care in the OHIC biennial rate review to analyze and recommend changes to primary care reimbursements.**

Families across the state are struggling to find primary care providers for their children due to a shortage of pediatric health care providers that will continue to increase. Less than half of pediatric primary care offices in Rhode Island are accepting new patients. Of the approximately 260 pediatricians currently providing primary care in RI, over a quarter are planning to retire in the next 6 years. The remaining practices will be unable to make up for this deficit in providers, leaving children with limited access to primary care pediatricians.

Medicaid is the primary funding source for pediatric care. **Over half (54%) of children 0-18 are covered by Medicaid. Rhode Island's Medicaid payment rates are 25% lower than neighboring states.** Pediatric primary care providers nationally are paid up to 25% less than other kinds of primary care providers, despite having the same as or more training, [according to an article in Time Magazine](#). It is difficult to increase the pediatric primary care workforce when the rates for 54% of the pediatric population are so much lower than MA and CT, even for providers who live in Rhode Island.

**Rhode Island needs to analyze and update pediatric primary care reimbursements in order to begin addressing the pediatric primary care crisis.** The number of primary care pediatricians will continue to decline as pediatricians retire, and the low reimbursement rates compared to neighboring states will exacerbate the shortage. The Department of Health indicated that "burnout in the field, an aging workforce, and the appeal of other specialties in medicine," are some of the factors contributing to the primary care pediatrics shortage, [according to a recent report from WPRI](#). The challenges families are currently facing finding pediatric health care will only get worse without decisive action. Children will likely miss out on receiving their routine preventive pediatric care and screenings. Families will have to turn to urgent care centers and hospital emergency rooms when their children experience routine illnesses.

We recommend the General Assembly strongly consider expediting the Medicaid rate review for pediatric primary care to happen in 2025. This Medicaid rate review process is a critical first step in addressing the shortage of pediatric primary care providers in Rhode Island.

**Pediatric primary care investments in children's health produce improved outcomes even in subsequent generations.** We all pay the long-term costs when children do not get what they need to thrive. We urge you to include this rate review in the FY 2026 budget. This primary care rate review will represent a step toward better access to pediatric primary care for Rhode Island children, as well as all Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.