



www.ProtectHealthRI.org

To: House Health & Human Services Committee
From: Karen Malcolm, Protect Our Healthcare Coalition
Date: April 1, 2025
Re: **SUPPORTING H5255** – Primary Care Rate Review

The Protect Our Healthcare Coalition is a group of leading Rhode Island non-profits and consumer groups with a goal to protect, improve, and expand equitable access to quality, person-centered, affordable health care for all. The Coalition strongly supports the intent of House Bill 5255, to include primary care, including pediatric care for babies and young children, in the state's rate review process.

Primary care is in crisis. Physicians are aging out, retiring early, or cutting back their hours. Those who remain have seen their patient rosters swell. Administrative burden, combined with decades of low reimbursement and under-investment in primary care continues to exacerbate the crisis. For too many Rhode Islanders, a health insurance card in their pocket doesn't mean a thing if they can't access the care they need when they need it. Across the state, we hear the frustration of patients. One 80 year old Newport resident, Penny Fitch, recently shared her story, noting

"We've had three primary care physicians in less than two years. And so many of my friends are in the same situation. As of March 14th, we are not going to have a primary care physician. We're able to see PAs and other medical people to help with things, but it's scary to think that we don't have a doctor that gets to know us and can treat our whole body.

It takes so long to get an appointment. I had to wait five months to get a spinal ablation last summer. And once I got it, I'm fine... But to wait five months after you've been in pain for almost six months is very, very difficult."

While the Protect Our Healthcare Coalition urges action through a primary care rate review, H5255 is limited in its scope. To fully address the crisis, the state will need to also address the rates paid by other payers and payment methodologies to ensure a stable and strong primary and pediatric care network for the people of Rhode Island.

We urge your action!

Thank you.

Protect Our Healthcare Coalition partners include: Economic Progress Institute, RIPIN, Mental Health Association RI, RI Health Center Association, Latino Policy Institute, Central Providence Opportunities: A Health Equity Zone (CPO-HEZ), United Way of Rhode Island, Senior Agenda Coalition RI, RI Medical Society, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, SEIU Rhode Island Council, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Leukemia/Lymphoma Society, RI Coalition for the Homeless, Rhode Island Working Families Party, Mental Health Recovery Coalition, RI Community Food Bank, RI Psychological Association, Substance Use & Mental Health Leadership Council, Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, HousingWorks RI, Rhode Island Organizing Project (RIOP), National Association of Social Workers RI Chapter, The Womxn Project, Advocates for Better Care

via email at: protectrihealth@gmail.com