

# Rhode Island Chapter

INCORPORATED IN RHODE ISLAND

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



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## Testimony in Support of H5988

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee,

On the behalf of the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, I would like to express my support for H5988, which would increase Medicaid payments for pediatric outpatient services to 130% of the Medicare rate.

We have expressed our gratitude to the Governor for his recent proposals to sure up primary care practices, but we are concerned that the help offered will not come in time to prevent worsening access issues for children of Rhode Island. The closure of Anchor Pediatrics has worsened our capacity issues, as it has left 7000 children without a medical home, and some of the providers have already committed to job opportunities in Massachusetts.

As described in previous testimony, and the attached information sheet, Rhode Island pediatricians do not have addition capacity to care for children unless we are able to recruit young pediatricians and providers from other states to offset losses from closures and retirements. **With 27% of the pediatric workforce in Rhode Island planning to retire by 2030**, we will continue to see practices shut down entirely unless we can make them financially viable and help them recruit appropriate physicians to take over operations.

**Without increased capacity to provide pediatric care, the children of Rhode Island will suffer.** Without pediatric care, our immunization rates will go down significantly, which will set the stage for outbreaks of preventable diseases like measles and whooping cough. Missed developmental screens will lead to poor developmental outcomes which will impact children as they enter the school system not ready to learn. Lack of access to preventative care for conditions like asthma and allergies along with poor access to timely sick care will lead to increased emergency room trips and hospital admissions which will cost the state more in the long run.

H5988 is an opportunity to help the children of Rhode Island now while we wait for a comprehensive rate review and other longer-term solutions to be implemented. RI Kids Count data show that 58% of children under age seven and 54% of children ages zero to eighteen are covered by Medicaid in Rhode Island which makes an increase in Medicaid rates an effective tool to provide immediate relief to pediatric practices. The recent increase implemented in 2023 was not sufficient, as it only covered a subset of billing codes and did not apply to our subspecialist and child psychiatry colleagues.

The pediatricians and other pediatric providers of Rhode Island are committed to the health and wellbeing of the children we serve. We have been able to provide exceptional care for less for decades, but are worried that we will not be able to maintain this level of care without additional resources for our practices and the ability to recruit the next generation of providers. Passage H5988 would send a message that the State of Rhode Island values its children, so we ask for your support.

Sincerely,

Peter Pogacar, MD, FAAP  
President  
Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Fox', with a stylized, cursive script.

Gregory Fox, MD, FAAP  
Advocacy Chair, Past President  
Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics