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In Support of **Bill H5988** hearing on 04/30/2025

I speak out in support of Bill H5988 and the need to increase funding for the infrastructure of our pediatric primary care here in Rhode Island. I am a pediatrician who trained at Hasbro some 25 years ago now and proudly chose to stay in Rhode Island. In the last 25 years I have seen Harvard Pilgrim collapse in the late 90s, and now Anchor Medical, both due in part to subpar payment models and an aging/retiring/burning out physician cohort in our state.

Payments for service remain over 25% higher in our neighboring states, making it hard to recruit and keep physicians of any type here. In the last 5 years my practice has absorbed over 1,000 patients from four private pediatric practices (as well as Village Medical) that have closed and now will work to aid the families disrupted by Anchor's closure. Yesterday the Governor announced his plans for a program to aid with recruitment and portions of that program are promising as a one time stop gap, but to bolster our primary care system we need sustained long-term support in the form higher payments to provide all that is needed. It's attracting more physicians here but also ongoing funding to ensure a continued pipeline. Without this, all the state suffers. Brown University, Providence College, and URI faculty call weekly as they move to the area and struggle to find primary care for their children. Friends text weekly asking if I can take on one more family they know. Big business looking to come to RI evaluate school and health care availability before locating here, and we are at a crisis point.

It's about having primary care available to decrease urgent care and emergency room utilization. Those services are much more costly, overburdened, and utilization will clearly increase this year after the upcoming Anchor closure. We know our patients through long-term relationships, and we provide care 7 days a week at all hours, and we need more providers as well as funds for staffing and office infrastructure.

Thank you for your attention,
Michelle Lefebvre, MD

