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30 April 2025

Chair Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing to reinforce the importance of H5988 to support the health and success of all children growing up in Rhode Island. From the days of Drs Cannon and Barrett, Rhode Island has built a robust universal system of care and protection for all children, which is uniquely dependent on community pediatric practices. As a result, kids have all benefitted from universal newborn screening, universal immunizations, Medicaid and/or commercial coverage for all pregnancies and children, and now close integration of children's mental health. I was responsible for RI Family Health programs for three decades, and our model has produced child health measures that are often the best in America.

From those early days, Rhode Island policy has assumed that every family raising kids should have care from a trusted community practice (including health centers), with close coordination between the Department of Health, insurers, and all the other threads of healthy child development. This approach has come to be known as a "medical home", and Rhode Island is still a model. But these decades of success will not continue if we cannot bring on the next generation of physicians to provide this excellent comprehensive community care. As noted in the data before you, payments for children's care in Rhode Island must be increased to a level that can attract and support the excellent young doctors our children and grandchildren need and deserve.

I endorse H5988 and encourage its urgent passage with the other needed reforms to our successful but stressed care system.

Sincerely,

Williamm Hollinshead MD MPH

Cc: Rep Blazejewski, Sen Zurier
Drs Pogacar, Fox, Lange, Flanagan