

Chris O'Brien

From: Diana Wohler <diana.wohler@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 2, 2026 10:29 PM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: Testimony in support of H7408

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Honorable Chair Abney of the
House Finance Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for H7408

February 3 2026

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Dr. Diana Wohler and I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 7408. As a Family Medicine physician practicing in Rhode Island, I strongly support the passage of H7408 and the efforts to secure the financial viability of Roger Williams Medical Center and Our Lady of Fatima Hospital. These hospitals play an indispensable role in providing critical healthcare services, including emergency care, inpatient treatments, and outpatient services, particularly to underserved and vulnerable populations. Their continued operation is vital not only for patient care but also for the health and economic stability of our communities.

I practice in West Warwick at a federally qualified health center, caring for low-income and vulnerable patients. Many of these patients struggle with access to care and transportation; having a nearby hospital where they can seek care could be the difference between timely care and significant morbidity. One of many patients who comes to mind is a woman who has struggled with unstable housing and lack of transportation, who cannot afford a ride share or taxi for transportation. She had an abscess on her leg, but was unable to get a ride to our clinic for me to drain the abscess. Thankfully, she lives within walking distance of Our Lady of Fatima Hospital, and was able to get her abscess evaluated and drained by medical professionals in a timely manner and oral antibiotics. Had she not been able to access care, she likely would have ended up with a much more serious infection necessitating IV antibiotics and potentially more morbid surgical intervention.

As a cautionary tale, I also remember the closure of Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island when I was a physician trainee. The ripple effects not only of having fewer local options for urgent and emergent care for patients who struggle with transportation spread to longer wait times and increasing demand for resources at The Miriam Hospital, an exodus of specialists from Pawtucket to clinics where they could more easily access their inpatient consults, and loss of jobs within and around the hospital and surrounding specialist clinics. The community still feels the effects of the loss of Memorial Hospital to this day, and we cannot subject our communities surrounding Roger Williams Medical Center and Our Lady of Fatima Hospital to the same.

The proposed financial support through the debt service reserve fund ensures that these essential hospitals can transition to new ownership under CharterCARE Health of Rhode Island, Inc., protecting 2,700 jobs and preventing further disruption to healthcare services. This bill is a proactive step in preserving vital healthcare infrastructure in our state, safeguarding public health, and ensuring that our most at-risk residents continue to have access to high-quality care. It also ensures that other parts of the healthcare system will not be overwhelmed by a sudden influx of new patients seeking care, a scenario that would threaten the stability of the healthcare system across Rhode Island.

I respectfully urge you to support H7408.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Diana Wohler, MD

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Diana Wohler, MD
She/Her/Hers