

House Finance Committee

Dr. Austin Vaughan, Pediatrician

3/24/2026

In opposition to H-7127 with respect to DOH budget/funding

Chairman Abney and esteemed members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Dr. Austin Vaughan and I'm a first-year pediatric resident in Providence. I am writing to voice my opposition to H-7127 with respect to the DOH budget – specifically the lack of funding for state home visiting programs as well as PediPRN .I am speaking on behalf of myself.

The extremes of what a pediatric clinic visit can entail are truly hard to describe. In my past three clinic days, I've had visits that are straightforward and non-stressful – when I get to ask kids about their best friends in school or read books alongside parents to their newborn children. And then there are visits where it feels like even two hours wouldn't be enough time. Families who have lost their housing and are living in a motel. Mothers with no social support who are struggling to find solid footing for their baby. Parents who are concerned for their teenager's mental health but have no idea where to turn to.

Family home visiting programs are an invaluable resource, particularly for vulnerable families, that I have already referred patients to in my short time in this state. Allowing for expert care and support in the comfort of one's home can have an enormous impact on the wellbeing of both children and their parents. In fact, studies show that these programs can save up to 5 times the cost of providing them! So not only will funding to federal matching levels bring tangible money into the state right now, but it will save the state even more money down the road. And, more importantly, it ensures that families have the support they need in order to raise happy and healthy children.

PediPRN is also a resource I have utilized, as it offers teleconsultation with mental health experts to primary care providers such as myself. Being able to rely on PediPRN for the challenging situations and conversations I have throughout any given day as a pediatrician is a tremendous boon to both my training – and more importantly – my patients. Not having this service available would decrease comprehensive care and outcomes for children across the state who are going through incredibly challenging situations.

As a National Health Service Corps Scholarship recipient, I have committed my career to primary care for underserved children. One of the factors that drew me to continue my training in Rhode Island was the investment in infrastructure geared toward supporting the most vulnerable families – because I know how important those resources can be for families who need it the most. For a state that is facing a primary care crisis, now is not the time to further limit the options for both families and providers! Rather, we should not only continue to fund the programs that work, but also asking what more we can do to support our communities.

It is imperative that these services be maintained for the children of Rhode Island. I ask you to please oppose the budget until these changes have been satisfied. Thank you for your time.

Dr. Austin Vaughan