



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

Re: H7503

March 30, 2026

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I write to you on behalf of the Rhode Island Academy of Family Physicians (RIAFP) in support of House Bill 7503, which would establish a Primary Care Scholarship Program to strengthen Rhode Island's healthcare workforce pipeline.

Rhode Island is facing a well-documented and worsening shortage of primary care clinicians. Recent data indicate that our state needs more than 250 additional full-time primary care providers to meet current demand. At the same time, the cost of medical education continues to rise, leaving many graduates with substantial debt that influences their career decisions. According to AAMC data from 2023-2024 medical students graduate with on average \$200,000 of debt. Too often, this financial burden steers talented students away from primary care and toward higher-paying specialties, further exacerbating access challenges for patients across our state.

H7503 represents a practical, evidence-based solution. By offering scholarships to students who commit to practicing primary care in Rhode Island, this program directly addresses both the financial barriers to entering primary care and the geographic maldistribution of providers. This bill sends a clear message that Rhode Island values and is willing to invest in primary care.

Furthermore, by reaching trainees early in their career, these funds might meaningfully shape decisions about specialty choice and location of practice, helping to strengthen the primary care workforce pipeline in RI. The proposed scholarship program is also likely to create a more diverse and representative workforce by lowering financial barriers for students from a wide range of backgrounds.

Strong primary care systems are associated with better health outcomes, lower healthcare costs, and reduced disparities. Indeed, as outlined in the 2023 Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner report on Primary Care, "accessible, high quality primary care is the foundation of an equitable, affordable, and high-performing health care system." Every additional primary care

physician contributes not only to improved access, but also to a more equitable, efficient and effective healthcare system overall.

On behalf of the RIAFP and the patients we serve, I respectfully urge you to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

Katharina de Klerk, DO  
Lisa Menard-Manlove, MD, FAAFP, MH  
Rhode Island Academy of Family Physicians