

**Testimony in support of House Bill 7686 AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY—PRIMARY CARE TRAINING SITES PROGRAM**

April 29, 2026

Members of the Rhode Island House Finance Committee

Rhode Island State House

Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Ashley Iacone, and I am a licensed Physician Assistant and Program Director at Bryant University's Physician Assistant Program in Smithfield, Rhode Island.

I am writing today in **strong support of House Bill 7686 AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY—PRIMARY CARE TRAINING SITES PROGRAM.**

As both a practicing clinician and a PA program educator who trains the next generation of primary care providers, I have a firsthand understanding of the urgent need this legislation addresses.

In my dual role as a health care provider and educator, I see every day how Rhode Island's primary care landscape is straining under the weight of growing demand and an insufficient workforce. The patients I serve, many of whom are underinsured, elderly, or living in medically underserved communities, depend on access to high-quality, continuous primary care. Simultaneously, as a program faculty member, I am responsible for preparing PA students to meet that very demand. The intersection of these two roles gives me a clear and urgent perspective: we cannot train enough primary care providers without the robust clinical infrastructure this bill supports.

Rhode Island is facing a primary care workforce crisis that is only expected to deepen in the coming years. Across the state, patients are waiting months or longer for primary care appointments. Communities in Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls bear a disproportionate burden of this shortage. Physician assistants are ideally positioned to fill this gap: we are trained as generalists, capable of delivering high-quality primary care across a range of settings, and we are increasingly choosing primary care as our professional home. But to do so, we need the training sites and preceptors to develop those skills during our formative clinical education.

The Primary Care Training Sites Program plays an indispensable role in making that training possible. Quality clinical training sites are not simply nice to have; they are the backbone of health professions education. Without adequate financial support for primary care sites to take on and supervise students, preceptors face an unfunded burden that many practices simply cannot

absorb. The result is a shrinking pool of available training opportunities at a time when our programs are working to grow their capacity. House Bill 7686 directly addresses this structural barrier by providing the financial support necessary to sustain and expand these training relationships.

At Bryant University's PA Program, we are deeply committed to producing graduates who choose primary care and who remain in Rhode Island to practice. We deliberately recruit students from within the state and emphasize community-based, patient-centered care throughout our curriculum. Our graduates are caring for Rhode Islanders in community health centers, rural practices, and underserved urban clinics. Our ability to grow the pipeline of primary care providers is directly tied to the availability of funded, high-quality training sites. Every primary care site that receives support through PCTSP is a site that can open its doors to the next generation of PAs, physicians, and nurse practitioners who will serve this state.

Investing in primary care training sites is one of the most cost-effective and high-impact strategies available to Rhode Island. The return on this investment is measurable: more providers choosing primary care specialties, more providers staying in-state to practice, and ultimately, more Rhode Islanders with access to the primary care they deserve. **I urge you to support House Bill 7686** and ensure that the Primary Care Training Sites Program continues to receive the funding it needs to fulfill its mission.

Thank you sincerely for your time and your commitment to the health of all Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

*Ashley A. Iacone, DMSc, MSPAS, PA-C*

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