

Testimony in Support of House Bill 7686 AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- PRIMARY CARE TRAINING SITES PROGRAM

House Finance Committee

April 30, 2026

Dear Chairperson Abney and members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Debra Hurwitz, I am a resident of Charlestown, Rhode Island and former Executive Director of the Care Transformation Collaborative of RI. As you know, we have a severe shortage of primary care providers in Rhode Island, our primary care training pipeline is insufficient to keep up with our aging and retiring primary care workforce. We need to train more primary care providers and to do this we need more training capacity in community-based primary care practices.

I support [House Bill 7686](#), titled **AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- PRIMARY CARE TRAINING SITES PROGRAM**

This program is a vital investment in Rhode Island's primary care clinician workforce and a cornerstone of our long-term strategy to expand access to primary care. This program is especially important to me both personally and professionally. South County has a very serious shortage of primary care doctors, and some have become concierge practices, taking a smaller number of patients and closed to new patients.

As you know, Rhode Island faces a widening primary care shortage, with patients increasingly unable to find a primary care clinician and practices struggling to recruit and retain physicians. The Primary Care Training Sites Program was created to take a proactive, strategic step toward addressing this challenge by supporting community-based primary care preceptors who train medical students and residents, nurse practitioner and physician assistant students in advanced primary care settings. These clinical training experiences are essential for shaping interest in primary care careers, particularly in Rhode Island's communities.

The program was implemented in July 2025 and is currently in progress with **34 primary care training sites from all five counties. Across the 34 sites over 130 preceptors were enrolled, successfully expanding access to primary care clinical training for medical, nurse practitioner and physician assistant students by 68% from a baseline of 354 trainees prior to the program to a projected 594 trainees in the current academic year (September 2025 to June 2026).**

The program provides financial incentives, a structured curriculum and peer learning collaborative supports for preceptors to strengthen and expand community-based primary care training, which is connected with retention of students who choose to practice in Rhode Island. Continued funding for this program is not included in the Governor's budget. Without sustained support, Rhode Island risks losing momentum at a time when the state cannot afford to step back. Disruption to the program would limit training capacity, diminish our ability to prepare future primary care clinicians, and undermine progress toward building a stable primary care workforce. In this first year, nine practices were waitlisted. Full funding is needed to expand the program beyond this year's capacity.

It is important to note that Rural Health funding cannot be used to fund this program since the program has been funded through state appropriation.

This investment is modest, but the return is significant. With funding, Rhode Island can:

- Continue to expand and build capacity for primary care clinical training opportunities across the state, especially necessary considering the proposed establishment of a medical school at URI.
- Deepen the pipeline of future primary care clinicians, including physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants who choose to practice primary care in Rhode Island
- Provide preceptors with needed resources, mentorship, and professional development
- Strengthen access to primary care for patients statewide

We are grateful for the progress this administration has made to address the primary care crisis, including support for Medicaid rate increases, loan repayment and the Wavemaker program, as well as workforce planning efforts. Continuing the Primary Care Training Sites Program is a natural extension of this work—and one of the most strategic, cost-effective steps Rhode Island can take to ensure that our future patients have access to high-quality primary care.

I urge you to vote in favor of bill 7686.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Debra Hurwitz
77 Montauk Rd, Charlestown, RI

For more information visit the [Primary Care Training Sites Program website](#)

[Primary Care Training Sites Program Report to the General Assembly](#)