

Christopher O'Brien, *Committee Clerk* House Finance Committee

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Good afternoon. I would like to provide testimony in support of [House Bill 7686](#) that provides funding for The Primary Care Training Sites Program.

I am a 68 year old Pediatrician who has practiced pediatrics in Rhode Island since 1987. I completed my residency at Rhode Island Hospital and joined a local practice. I really did not consider any other opportunities as my wife was employed in Rhode Island and we really loved the area. Practicing in Rhode Island has been a true joy. We have raised our 2 children here, one of whom is a physician who chose to practice in Massachusetts.

I truly love what I do, but over the years, practicing primary care has become increasingly challenging. The introduction of an electronic health record has increased the length of my day by a minimum of 1-2 hours. I must spend an inordinate amount of time completing patient encounters at the end of the day. This burden has contributed to "burn out" and early retirement of many primary care physicians and providers.

As you are well aware, Rhode Island medical reimbursement rates are some of the lowest in the country. Primary care physician salaries are significantly lower than many other specialties. Medical student graduates are often burdened with significant student debt. My daughter finished medical school with more than 300,00 dollars of debt!

In this current environment, it is almost impossible to recruit medical students to join primary care practices. We recently tried to fill a

physician vacancy created by a retirement. We interviewed 3 graduating residents from Hasbro Children's Hospital and 2 other physicians from out of state, but were unsuccessful. 4 of the 5 took positions in other states because of better reimbursement and a higher starting salary. The person we were able to hire was already working locally and has significant personal ties to the area.

Our practice was fortunate enough to receive funds from the Primary Care Training Grant during this past year 9/1/2025-6/30/2026. These funds have helped restore my passion for teaching. I consistently promote the many positive aspects of practicing primary care pediatrics in Rhode Island to medical students who rotate through my office. Current post-graduate school (residency training) is very hospital/complex care oriented. Supporting teaching in primary care settings will encourage graduating medical students to pursue practicing primary care medicine in Rhode Island.

I appreciate your anticipated support of [House Bill 7686](#) to continue funding for The Primary Care Training Site Program.

Robert T Griffith Jr MD