

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

April 30, 2026

Dear Chairperson Abney and Members of The Rhode Island House Finance Committee:

I am a primary care physician who lives in Providence, House District 4, and works in Rhode Island.

I submit this written testimony in strong support of HB 7686 titled **AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - PRIMARY CARE TRAINING SITES PROGRAM**. I am a “preceptor trainer” for the primary care physicians in this program, which means that I train the 130 primary care physicians in this program across 34 sites who agree to supervise medical, nursing and PA students on their rotations in primary care. In this role, **I see first-hand the game-changing effects of this funding in the 2025-2026 fiscal year**. I submit this testimony with the request that it can be extended, for the health of our patients and the health of our state.

As you know, the primary care shortage continues to widen, which worsens the health of our state and drives up costs. As a former patient at Anchor Medical and as a PCP myself, even I had to wait 9 months to obtain an appointment with a new primary care physician – and that was with connections. Many Rhode Islanders are still waiting. Failure to invest in quality primary care means that patients delay getting care until things are more serious, often winding up in the Emergency Department. **Investing in primary care improves health and saves money** – for instance, I am able to perform a knee joint injection for a third of the cost of the orthopedist, and get someone back to work faster than if the patient had gone to Urgent care and been referred to orthopedics.

The reasons for the shortage of primary care providers are many, but one major reason is that young graduates of medical, nursing and PA programs are not choosing to go into primary care in Rhode Island. Of one of the reasons is that we do not expose our students early enough to examples of quality primary care practices. **We know that early exposure works** – students who have had positive experiences early on in their training are more likely to go into that field. In my case, my early exposure as a student to primary care and reproductive health definitely determined the path I took years later.

The Primary Care Training Sites Program is a smart and efficient use of limited state funds because:

1. **The relatively small compensation to primary care providers has effectively incentivized them to take on more students – a 68% increase from the prior year.** They are overworked and overwhelmed and simply will not keep taking on more work without some form of incentive.
2. **The training program has improved the quality of the primary care rotation experience for students – as trainers, we provided each site with a student and preceptor handbook, modules for everyone to get up to speed on provision of high quality primary care, and we hold quarterly learning collaboratives with important topics such as how to teach effectively. These have raised the bar of the program.**

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:

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.

As a primary care doctor and Rhode Islander,

Please support HB 7686 for the health and health care of our state.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions; I would be happy to be a resource to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MSOBOTA" in a stylized, cursive font.

Mindy Sobota, MD FACP