

This is my testimony for bill (2024-H 8072)

Hello,

I was a primary care physician working in South County for the last 21 years. As of 12/2022, I had to change my job due to the stress of being a primary care physician. Being a good primary care physician means that I took the time to listen to my patient's concerns and try to give them my full attention when they are in front of me. With the current insurance reimbursements and how my employer requires me to meet quotas to keep their main system afloat from insurance payments, so I worked late into the night to do chart documentation and respond to my patients' phone calls and emails (all unpaid work.) I have to meet my quota on how many patients I have to see per day to make sure I get a good review from my patients, which can mean how long they have to wait on the phone or if there is no toilet paper in the bathroom (which are all out of my control.) I never felt so deflated as a physician and all the job skills I was trained to do for so many years. I felt that I am just a number. I felt very discouraged and had to make a job change for my mental health and the health of my family. I was lucky to get a job at our state university's student health services. I got a pay cut, but got my sanity back. My job is just to be a doctor to cure and relieve my patient's suffering. I do not have any insurance company telling me how they are going to pay me for how I care for my patient. I feel the same good feeling I had when I first went into medicine 30 years ago. I am there to help my patients. What a wonderful feeling.

I am one of the lucky primary care physicians because I am old enough that the cost of a medical education and affording a home life's not out of this world. I do not have the burden of student debt that can be over \$500,000 after college and med school and contemplating which part of medicine will help pay my bills. Unfortunately primary care is not what is going to pay the bills. I know personally of a few new residency grads that wanted to do primary care, but found out how little pay they will get for the amount of work they have to do and that it will take decades to pay off their student loans, so they decided to specialize and not do primary care.

I do not think my vacant spot as a primary care physician in the South County community has been filled when I left it at the end of 2022. I appreciate all the primary care physicians that stay on to fight the fight and take care of Rhode Island citizens. I just think that any smart physician who wants to get paid for good work and needs to pay their med school debt would rather go across the border to Massachusetts or Connecticut to get a better paycheck for the same work. Who wouldn't!

Even in college medicine, I am finding it hard to get these young adults a primary care physician. We take care of them while they are with us for the 4 years during the academic year. But once they graduate, or during the time in between the academic years, they do not have a primary care outside of the university. Many of them are of the age where they graduated out of their pediatrician and cannot find an adult primary care physician to see them in a reasonable time. As we all know, young adult's mental health problems have been skyrocketing since Covid. Many of these young adults are being treated with effective psychiatric medicines that are helping them through the hard time. But they don't have a primary care physician that can continue their treatments off campus.

We are short of many primary care and specialists here in Rhode Island due to the low reimbursement rates compared to our neighboring states. I have to thank all of our physicians that decided to stay here. But personally I think we are in a critical status of taking care of our

Rhode Island residents' health. It takes the loss of YOUR primary care physician and you will suddenly find that you cannot get refills of your vital diabetes medicine, hypertension medicine or your very stable depression medication. When you run out of these medicines, you're going to get very sick. You cannot see your specialists that is vital to your care because you do not have a primary care physician who is the one that sends the referrals. So the cost to the healthcare system and insurance companies is going to explode, because patients are not able to get good preventative care and is going to get sicker and cost more money for the state. This is all a very preventable outcome, but someone in our government needs to help us health care providers to be able to do our job to continue to take care of the health of our state residents. The next person that can suffer the health consequences of the current health crisis can be any one of us.

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