

State of Rhode Island

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Senate Chamber

CHAIR
Committee on
Environment & Agriculture

CO-CHAIR
Commission on Child Care

Committee on
Health & Human Services

August 28, 2024

Senator Pamela J. Lauria
URI President Marc B. Parlange
Health Care Workforce Study Commission
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Senator Lauria and President Parlange:

I regret that I am unable to join you and the rest of the commission members today for our first meeting. To everyone who has chosen to devote their time and talent to this significant effort, I thank you for your willingness to serve.

My primary profession is working as a licensed mental health counselor in Rhode Island. From my perspective working in our healthcare system, I know what a significant role primary care providers - including pediatricians and OBGYN's - play as the key point people in all health care services delivery. After decades of work in our community experiencing the multiple challenges of our current system, I first ran for Senate with the goal of working to solve these problems.

It is both from my perspective as a mental health care provider and as a legislator committed to ensuring all Rhode Islanders have access to the health care they need that I view the work of this commission as a foundational part of fixing our system. Addressing Rhode Island's critical shortage of primary care providers, which looms as an even greater crisis in the years ahead, is urgent. Strengthening the primary care workforce pipeline in our state was a key focus of the Senate's HEALTH Initiative in the most recent session, and with the leadership of Senator Lauria we took important steps forward on short term measures. It is my hope that this commission can create sustainable solutions for the future.

I am excited that evaluating the possibility of a medical school at the University of Rhode Island is a central part of this commission's charge. A state-based medical school has enormous potential to expand our workforce and transform Rhode Island's health care landscape, helping attract future primary care providers to study, train and work in our state. It can also play a central role in our efforts to confront other health-related challenges we face, including the ongoing mental health crisis. Ideally, these goals can be combined with creating accessible pathways for Rhode Islanders to pursue a medical education that will allow them to stay right here and serve the communities they know and love best, to the benefit of all.

I want to thank President Ruggerio, Leader Pearson, Whip Lawson, and my Senate colleagues for their support and leadership as we have worked to make health care more accessible and affordable for Rhode Islanders. This commission's findings will be vital in setting our path forward, and I look forward to our work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alana M. DiMario".

Senator Alana M. DiMario