

Dear Honorable Members of the Rhode Island General Assembly,

I am writing to express strong support for Senate Bill S2806, which seeks to establish pay parity for Nurse Practitioners (NPs) in Rhode Island.

Primary care is the foundation of a high-functioning healthcare system, yet access remains a challenge. Nationally, 16.3% of individuals report having no primary care provider, and even in Rhode Island, 11.5% of residents lack access. Limited access drives patients to rely on emergency departments and urgent care settings for non-emergent needs—placing strain on already overburdened systems and failing to provide the continuity of care essential for optimal health outcomes.

At the same time, the United States faces a projected shortage of up to 124,000 healthcare providers by 2034, with primary care representing a significant portion of this gap. Nurse Practitioners are uniquely positioned to help address this crisis. With 88% certified in primary care and over 70% actively delivering primary care services, NPs play a critical role in improving access, particularly for Medicare and Medicaid populations.

Extensive research demonstrates that NP-provided care is comparable to physician care in quality, outcomes, and cost. Studies such as Liu et al. (2020) and Barnett et al. (2022) found no significant differences in clinical outcomes or costs between patients managed by NPs and those managed by physicians. In addition, NP-led care is associated with fewer emergency room visits, shorter hospital stays, and high patient satisfaction.

Despite this, outdated reimbursement policies continue to undervalue NP services. Medicare reimburses NPs at 85% of physician rates for the same services, based on assumptions that no longer reflect current practice. In Rhode Island—where NPs have full practice authority and are held to the same clinical, quality, and productivity standards as physicians—this disparity is both inequitable and counterproductive.

Pay inequity not only undervalues the contributions of NPs but also undermines recruitment, retention, and healthcare system sustainability. Rhode Island already lags behind neighboring states in reimbursement rates, limiting program development and exacerbating workforce shortages. States like Oregon have successfully implemented “equal pay for equal work” policies, demonstrating that reimbursement reform is both feasible and impactful.

Senate Bill S2806 represents a critical step toward aligning reimbursement with the reality of modern healthcare delivery. Fair reimbursement would enable healthcare systems to reinvest in patient care programs, strengthen workforce retention, and expand access to high-quality primary care services across the state.

Billing should reflect patient acuity and clinical needs—not the credentials of the provider—while compensation should fairly reflect the education, training, and responsibilities of the clinician delivering care.

By passing S2806, Rhode Island can take meaningful action to support its healthcare workforce and improve access to care for all residents. I urge you to support this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Kayla Cross DNP, APRN, FNP-C