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RI Senate Health and Human Services Committee

March 24, 2026

S. 3064

- Good afternoon Chair Murray, Vice Chair Lauria and honorable members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee
- I am here today in support of S. 3064 - a bill that reflects the final recommendation of the Senate commission and would provide the first phase of state investment required to establish a public medical school at URI.
- I'd like to thank Senate President Lawson for her leadership on this legislation and Senator Lauria - over the past two years we've worked closely as co-chairs on the Senate Commission and it has been an incredibly productive collaboration.
 - I'd also like to thank Speaker Shekarchi for his support of the Commission and acknowledge the support of the late Senate President Dominick Ruggiero as well.
- As the state's flagship public research university, the University of Rhode Island is deeply committed to addressing the most pressing challenges facing our state.

- The well-documented shortage of primary care physicians is a major threat to the economic vitality of Rhode Island and URI is well-positioned to help address this shortage.
- URI already plays a key role in developing the healthcare workforce for Rhode Island.
 - Currently graduating over 3,000 health care professionals each year from our Colleges of Nursing, Pharmacy and Health Sciences.
- The University is well-positioned to establish a public medical school:
 - Strong foundation in Colleges of Nursing, Pharmacy, and Health Sciences
 - R1 research infrastructure
 - Established clinical partnerships in the state
- Demand is there:
 - 100 Rhode Islanders leave the state each year to attend medical school and they don't return
- Emphasis on interdisciplinary approach
- AI built into foundational curriculum

- A new public medical education program centered on primary care and community-based training could be a national leader in the necessary paradigm shift required in medical education.
- It would prioritize primary care and training physicians to serve in Rhode Island's underserved communities.
- URI's college of medicine would provide greater access for Rhode Islanders - *like those 100 Rhode Islanders leaving the state* - to complete medical school and residency training in Rhode Island in order to expand the physician pipeline for the state and retain more graduates to practice locally.
- The Commission's recommendation, based on the feasibility study conducted by Tripp Umbach, a nationally recognized consulting firm that specializes in medical education, the first phase of the medical school requires an initial \$20 million investment from the state. This funding will support planning, accreditation, clinical networking and curriculum development.
- S. 3064 is an important first step in phase 1 - providing \$5 million in FY 2027 and demonstrating a commitment to provide the remaining \$15 million in fiscal years 2028 and 2029.

- By prioritizing primary care, particularly for those in underserved communities, a URI School of Medicine would not only address current shortages, but also lay the foundation for a healthier, more equitable future for all Rhode Islanders.
- URI will continue to work in partnership with the state on the establishment of a public medical school and this legislation is critical to phase 1 of that effort.
- Thank you.