

Ken Lesem

Dear Senate Health and Welfare Committee Members,

I support publicly funded primary health care because:

1. Universal publicly financed primary care would reduce the need for expensive hospitalizations and emergency room visits by preventing disease and treating conditions earlier.
2. It would lower health care premiums for all! (Vermont law does not allow premium rates to reflect services private insurers do not pay for).
3. Primary care could be financed for relatively little, we estimate approximately \$160 million for the entire state per year. This is less than the cost of a proposed new hospital building at Fletcher Allen.
4. Financing for the bills would be taken up next session, but these bills would create a road map to universal publicly financed primary care. They would keep us on the road to health care as a public good set out in Act 48.
5. If we don't invest in primary care, it won't be there ten years from now. We will be left with specialists, and this will not only be bad for public health, but also vastly increase costs!
6. Almost 1/3 of all privately insured Vermonters under age 65 are now underinsured. It is even more striking with the young; 63% of those aged 18-24 with private health insurance are underinsured. Underinsurance means people do not access care when they need it due to financial barriers. Primary care for all with no fees at point of service would help ensure access to care.
7. Of Vermonters who went to the doctor once in the previous 12 months, most (61.6%) did not visit a specialist at all. Primary care is where most of us access care most of the time!
8. Only about 10% of privately insured Vermonters get their insurance through the Exchange. So, even if we bolster the Exchange, this does nothing for almost 90% of privately insured Vermonters, a substantial number of whom are underinsured, and who would typically access the health care system through primary care.

Ken Lesem
90 James Ave
Burlington, VT 05408