

## Rebecca Buck

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**From:** deb richter <drdebvt@sover.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 12, 2018 5:58 AM  
**To:** Rebecca Buck  
**Subject:** Testimony regarding S53- The Universal Primary Care bill  
**Attachments:** drdebvt.vcf

Dear Ms Buck:

Could you please distribute this to the Senate Appropriations committee members regarding S53- the Universal Primary Care bill.

Thanks.

Best, Deb Richter,MD

Dear Senators:

I am urging you to support S53- the universal primary care bill. I am a practicing family physician in Cambridge VT. I also have an addiction medicine practice in Burlington. Vermonters are facing more and more cost sharing in an attempt by employers and insurers to bring down the cost of insurance. Unfortunately, patients make self rationing decisions due to these costs and often seek care late in their disease when it is more costly and sometimes even deadly.

Some examples of patients who have self rationed are evident in my small practice in Cambridge . One woman waited to come in after suffering severe shortness of breath for 4 days. She is a working Vermonter who had health insurance ,but with a huge deductible. She thought it was her asthma and she kept taking her asthma inhaler. When she couldn't stand it any longer she came in gasping for breath. It turned out she was having a massive heart attack. She spent 3 days in the ICU and now has irreversible heart damage.

Another insured patient waited 18 months before seeking care after losing 100 pounds due to being unable to swallow solid food. At that point he was diagnosed with Stage 4 esophageal cancer. He died several months later. He also had a huge deductible .

A third patient who was uninsured had a mass in one of her breasts. She finally sought care when the mass started bleeding a year after first discovering the mass. It is an aggressive tumor and had already spread to her lymph nodes.

I could go on But I know your time is limited.

I am just one doctor among 900 primary care practitioners in Vermont. So we can do math to get some idea of the scope of the problem.

Primary care is cheap. It represents less than 6% of the total and that includes substance abuse and mental health services. We know that when it is freely available to a population, that the population is healthier , outcomes are better and have lower system costs.

S53 is intended to ensure that all Vermonters have no financial barriers to seeking primary care when they need it.

I urge you to vote in favor of this bill.

Thank you for listening.

Best,

Deb Richter, MD