

VERMONT MEDICAL SOCIETY

Date: March 27, 2018

To: Senate Health & Welfare Committee

From: Jessa Barnard, VMS Executive Director

Re: FY 2019 Budget

Thank you for allowing the Vermont Medical Society to testify before you today regarding the FY 2019 budget on behalf of our over 2000 physician and physician assistant members. Below we address two items of particular importance to the ability of Vermonters to access primary care services.

Primary Care Case Management Payment

As you are aware, the \$2.50 Primary Care Case Management (PCCM) per member per month payment was fully cut in the DVHA-portion of the Governor's Recommended FY19 Budget. The House-passed version of the FY19 Budget aims to restore *half of this funding*, to \$1.25 per month per Medicaid patient seen by primary care practices. Vermont's primary care practices operate on very thin margins, piecing together funding from the Blueprint, the PCCM payments, the ACO (if they are eligible or able to participate) and any other available source to offer comprehensive care to their patients. This cut will greatly impact their ability to provide services.

The full comments from our members regarding the services currently provided with these funds that would be lost under the proposed cut are attached, but excerpts include the following:

- ***We use the funding for care coordination - helping patients get set up with counseling services, transportation, help them negotiate referral processes particularly around pediatric issues with impaired or limited parents.***
- ***Our team-based approach incorporates case management within the scope of the care that we provide. The PMPM monies doled out by Medicaid are folded into the system allowing us to provide well-rounded services to our patients,***
- ***This would result in an \$18,000 loss of revenue for our (independent) practice. As PCPs, case management or perhaps a better term would be patient care, is what we use this funding for.***
- ***This PMPM payment is really important for us to maintain two key positions in our office: 1) community care nurse [and] 2) mental health coordinator***
- ***The \$2.50 PMPM payment that we now receive enables us to employ the RN care coordinator, and to maintain the important connection with the schools. Without these funds, we would have to reduce care coordinator hours significantly. As things stand now, even with the funds, we are having to reassess our presence in the schools due to the cost.***

As you read the comments and prepare your memo for the Senate Appropriations Committee, VMS asks that you fully restore this valuable funding that is vital to primary care delivery in Vermont.

AHEC Loan Repayment for Health Professionals

The House has fully restored the \$667,000 available to the AHEC health professional loan repayment program. VMS asks that the Senate maintain full funding for this program, which is one tool Vermont

can offer to recruit and retain primary care clinicians, including psychiatrists, dentists and nurses. Again, the comments of a member help give voice to the importance of this program:

I have served for 12 years as a member of the Northern Vermont AHEC board, now retired. During that time I read the requests of hundreds of applicants who were providing services in our portion of the state for assistance with loan repayment. These are professionals already earning less than peers in other states, who are giving a measurable service to our citizens in return for subsidies which rank among the lower range available to them nationally. Realistically, Vermont recruits from a pool of professionals who can work in any state. Recruiting primary care clinicians who are willing to commit to long term service in our state is a difficult thankless task. In fact, it was a major reason for my closing my primary care practice and passing it on to a local hospital which was no more successful in recruiting than I had been. The appropriation from the Legislature in past years has put Vermont in the lower tercile of state loan repayment programs. Eliminating it altogether would take us out the race entirely. - Thomas A. E. Moseley, M.D, Pediatrician, Newport, VT

Thank you for considering our comments and please let us know if we can provide you with any additional information.