

Dear Senate Health & Welfare Committee:

We write to you in support of S.263. Our group has worked closely with Sen. Harrison on the development of the bill and provided help with witnesses. We have watched the testimony and are sending you today an excerpt from the following Physician Census 2020 report which documents the urgent need for primary care physicians:

- The Vermont Department of Health Physician Census Statistical Report 2020 <https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/document/HSI-stats-prov-phys20-detail.PDF> Please refer to two tables:

∅ Table 38 (pg. 53) reporting on Primary Physicians FTEs ratio to population by local health district illustrating the lowest number of FTE providers evident in Newport, Rutland, Springfield and St. Albans local health districts.

∅ Table 58 (pg. 74) comparing the number of FTE primary care physicians by county between 2010 and 2020. Even though their populations increased over that 10 year period, the following counties experienced significant losses in FTE primary care physicians: Addison, Lamoille, Orleans, Windsor, Windham and Washington counties.

Jessica Moore, Vermont Department of Health Public Health Analyst is in charge of preparing the physician census report. She notes that preliminary data from the 2022 Vermont Physicians Census suggests that these decreases are persisting in most regions and the statewide total of primary care physicians and their hours spent in active patient care is continuing to decline. For definitions of FTE, active patient care, and areas covered by local health districts, please see appendices at the end of the full report linked above. Address any questions to [AHS.VDHPhysicianCensus@vermont.gov](mailto:AHS.VDHPhysicianCensus@vermont.gov)

As a further illustration, a member of our work group contributed the following story she heard this week from a Burlington community member:

“My husband was complaining from headache for almost 4 years and his primary at the community health center keep telling him to take Tylenol, believe me we were buying the Tylenol in huge amount because he was simply living on it. Then 3 weeks ago he started vomiting and the headache was unbearable and Tylenol is not doing anything. Finally, the primary referred him to an MRI. Which came back abnormal, they were not sure if it is encephalitis or Infiltrative Glioma and his primary referred him to an urgent Neurologist to take a look and do cerebrospinal fluid testing and so on. So we waited three days for the neurologist to call us with an appointment, but no one called so my husband went to UVM neurology department and said I need to have an urgent appointment and they said the next available is late September. My husband refused to be that late and when he came back home I called the hospital and tried to make this urgent appointment but unfortunately September what was available. Our only alternative was the ER.”

Thank you for your attention to S.236. We hope you are able to vote unanimously on its passage this week. Please ask the Committee Assistant to add this to the record.

Sincerely,

Diana Wahle, NAACP Executive Committee/Diverse Workforce Development Committee co-chair

Mona Tolba, Health Equity & Community Engagement Coordinator, Vermont Department of Health

Candice Taylor-Diallo, Community Health Equity Grant Coordinator, United Way of Windham County

Ruth Steinmetz, NAACP Health Justice Committee Steering Committee

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My pronouns are she, her, hers.