

Subject: Primary Care Funding Cliff for 2026

Hello members of the House Health Care and Appropriations Committees:

I am a constituent from Jericho and work in Williston as an Independent Primary Care Doctor and Medical Director at Thomas Chittenden Health Center (TCHC).

Vermont's decision to delay implementation of the AHEAD model has put TCHC's very existence in Jeopardy. TCHC is Vermont's oldest Independent Primary Care Group Practice. We have served as a Primary Care Practice since 1969 and have been functioning as a Medical Home, before that was a designation, for some 14,000 – 15,000 patients mostly in Chittenden County but also have patients from Addison, Lamoille, and Franklin County. Over the years, we have remained viable through our ability to navigate various programs and innovations for funding from the State and other programs, most recently One Care of Vermont's CPR program.

With the lack of extra funding in 2026, we will not be able to meet the needs of our patients from fee for service payments alone. As you may be aware from the pay parity discussions years ago, we only receive half or less for the same services that are done at hospital-based practices. It has been shown that our care saves the system financially given our ability to provide services for patients we know and our ability to keep them outside the hospital system. In addition to bringing in less revenue, our operational costs continue to rise. As a small business, we offer health care benefits to our employees and their families. I don't have to tell you how the cost of health care coverage has risen exponentially in Vermont. We also have a difficult time staffing our ancillary services given our inability to compete with hospital-based compensation. All in all, the landscape for independent primary care practices in our State is bleak.

Our projections predict that we stand to lose 300,000-500,000 dollars in revenue for the 2026 calendar year if something isn't done to help. This is roughly the amount of UVM's CEO's bonus for 2024, and it could stand to make operations unattainable at TCHC.

As a fifth generation Vermonter and first-generation physician, I am committed to continuing to serve my community at TCHC. While we wouldn't want to let any of our staff go in 2026, we may need to consider having our partners bear the economic risk. Would you really ask our devoted Primary Care Physicians to consider working the year for half their pay? We already have an enormously difficult time recruiting for our primary care workforce in Vermont without this projected financial loss. Please find ways to allocate funding to primary care to help save our independent practices who are intimately connected with our communities, so we can continue to provide high level care at a lower cost for Vermont.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue. Please feel free to reach out to me via email or phone.

Sincerely,

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