

Dear Representative Varin,

I am writing to urge you to support stop gap funding of \$5.5 million in primary care funding and \$4.5 million in Medicare blueprint funding while we transition from the OneCare ACO model to AHEAD. As you know Vermont is now in cohort II of the AHEAD model which leaves a one year gap in funding. Please support these fiscal notes. As you know, Vermont has been a leader in primary care transitions and reform. We cannot take our foot off the gas pedal; strong primary care is the foundation of our healthcare system. Solid investment in primary care is what slows the train and reduces health care costs.

Primary care's success have been in many ways thanks to the hard work you have been doing in the legislature. Things like telemedicine parity, regulating prior authorization, and supporting primary care workforce recruitment through scholarships and loan repayment. Many of these things have had large indirect/background effects on patients by improving timely access to visits and treatments and helped to ensure they are being treated by providers of the highest caliber.

What we are at risk of defunding, however, are some of the face-to-face services that help us provide the right care, at the right time, in the right place. Patients are busy, patients have financial insecurity, patients have transportation limitations, patients have job insecurity. Now, more than ever, they don't have the time or resources to attend multiple medical appointments or travel to multiple locations for care, counseling, blood draws and imaging.

Funding primary care and Blueprint allows patients to receive services from people they know in places that are accessible to them. For example, I have been caring for patients with substance use disorder in my office for almost a decade. Because of some of the support we have received from Blueprint, these patients have received wrap-around care from myself, a social worker, and nurse case manager on a regular basis. The care team meets monthly to huddle and review our patients. We brainstorm the best ways to help them maintain recovery, navigate their stressors, and access the care they need. I've celebrated little wins like saving enough money to replace carpets to big wins like re-establishing family connections, maintaining and being promoted in jobs, and buying a home. Further, establishing relationships with these patients has allowed me to address primary care needs. One of my patients now has well-controlled diabetes for the first time in years. Another, has controlled COPD because we've been able to start inhalers. Many of my patients are now vaccinated for flu and COVID. All of these things have a big impact on improving the health our community.

Without primary care funding and Blueprint support we risk falling backwards into a primary care landscape that lacks the ancillary support to provide team-based care. It means patients will come to their appointments every 6-12 months and leave, unassisted, with no touchpoints in between to support their success in caring out their health care plans. It will stop forward momentum. We all know how complicated medicine is these days. We need to support our patients, especially our seniors, make the most of the care they do receive.

Please make primary care and Blueprint funding your priority.

Sincerely,

Anne