

Dear State Legislators,

I am a family medicine physician practicing in Pownal, Vermont. I am currently the Chair of the Department of Primary Care for Southwestern Vermont Medical Center and serve on the Board of Trustees for Southwestern Vermont Medical Center. I also served as the Regional Care Representative from the Bennington County Health Service Area to OneCare during 2024. In my own office, I work closely with Case Management provided through Blueprint funds. The Case Manager is an essential part of our team and a crucial resource. When personnel are available, we also have counselors in our office funded by Blueprint that provide much needed support.

Working briefly for One Care gave me detailed insight into the way that OneCare supported primary care practices in my area financially. Funds received from OneCare helped to support providing patients in our area with much needed medical equipment and access to mental health and substance abuse counseling resources. Additionally, SVMC had planned to use OneCare funds to add nursing triage to our primary care on-call system to support our providers and provide enhanced services to our patients.

On behalf of myself and other primary care physicians at SVMC, I implore you to support the requested measures detailed by the Vermont Medical Society including:

ONE-TIME FUNDING Practice Sustainability/Health Reform - Fill the SFY2026 \$5,514,308 primary care funding gap This gap is created by Vermont deciding not to join the AHEAD Model until 2027, which creates a gap in funding for primary care practices between the end of the ACO and start of the AHEAD Model. This ask includes filling one fiscal year's loss of Population Health Model (PHM) Program funding for all OneCare Participating primary care practices (\$4,678,966) and the Comprehensive Payment Reform independent primary care prospective payment program (\$835,342).

Fill the \$10.8 million in lost Medicare payments to Blueprint for Health Community Health Teams, Patient Centered Medical Homes and the SASH program. We support the Governor's SFY2026 Recommend, which includes this funding.

BASE FUNDING Workforce - Continue the Medical Student Incentive Scholarship Program Provides scholarships for up to 10 third- and fourth-year UVM medical students who commit to practicing primary care outside of Chittenden County. To date 22 scholarships have been awarded. The program is scheduled to sunset July 1, 2027. Please remove the 2027 sunset and invest \$500,000 per year for this vital recruitment and retention tool.

Practice Sustainability/Health Reform - Continue the Blueprint for Health expansion pilot to assist practices to address mental health, SUD and SDOH needs The pilot funding will end this year absent legislative action. While the Governor's SFY2026 Recommend allows carry over funding to be used for the pilot for a third year, there is no funding allocated and it is unclear how much carryover is available – this pilot is needed, including support for existing DULCE practices.

Adjust fee schedules for the cost of providing care: The Medicaid professional (RBRVS) fee schedule should adjust to account for the Medicare Economic Index inflation measure of 3.5% and FQHC encounter rate should reflect the cost of care.

Thank you for supporting these crucial initiatives,
Reija Rawle, MD MS