

Dear Senate Appropriations Committee Members,

My name is Sarah Caffry, and I am a fourth-year medical student at the University of Vermont's Larner College of Medicine as well as a lifelong Vermonter. I'm writing to urge you to fully fund Vermont's primary care programs in the FY26 budget to address the urgent and growing need for accessible, community-based care across our state. While these programs serve many critical purposes, I want to contribute my perspective as a student on the growing workforce crisis and the barriers that make it increasingly difficult for trainees to enter primary care fields.

We are in the midst of a national workforce crisis for primary care providers. Nearly 65% of Vermonters live in nonmetropolitan areas, where access to primary care is already limited... and worsening dramatically. By 2037, national projections show the U.S. will meet only 42% of the need for general internal medicine physicians in nonmetro areas. The outlook is similarly bleak for pediatrics (53%), family medicine (68%), and geriatrics (34%) ([National Center for Health Workforce Analysis](#)). Without urgent investment, Vermont's rural communities will be among the hardest hit by this national shortage, leaving patients without consistent access to preventive and relationship-based care.

As a medical student committed to a career in primary care, I've seen firsthand how difficult it is for many of my peers to choose this path. The [US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) demonstrates that primary care physicians are compensated nearly 30% less than in-hospital specialists while facing longer hours and higher burnout. When paired with high educational debt – an average of \$234,000 in medical school debt, on top of any undergraduate debt – and long training timelines, this gap makes primary care financially unsustainable for many students, even those who are passionate about it. This imbalance creates a vicious cycle: fewer trainees pursue primary care, existing clinicians are stretched thinner, and patients face longer waits and reduced access.

That's why I urge you to support full funding for the programs that sustain and grow our state's primary care infrastructure. Programs like the **Blueprint for Health, Population Health Management**, and the **Comprehensive Payment Reform model** help create a more sustainable environment for primary care. So do targeted investments like the **Maple Mountain Consortium residency** and the **Medical Student Incentive Scholarship Program**, which offer meaningful support for those of us hoping to practice in underserved areas of Vermont.

I respectfully ask you to fully fund the following in the FY26 budget:

- \$4.4m GF/\$10.8m GC for the **Blueprint for Health** Community Health Team CHT, Primary Care Medical Home (PCMH) and SASH program (in Governor's and House budget);
- \$4.6m GF for the OneCare Vermont **Population Health Management** (PHM) Program for all participating primary care practices (House budget includes \$3.12m);
- \$835K GF for the **Comprehensive Payment Reform** (CPR) for independent primary care practices (full amount in House budget);
- \$1.385 million to continue the **Blueprint for Health Pilot Expansion Program & DULCE** that invests Medicaid dollars in expanded Community Health Team staff at

- primary care practices to address mental health, substance use disorder and SDOH needs (not funded in House budget);
- \$515,000 for the **Maple Mountain Consortium family medicine residency** program - a new primary care pipeline that will train 4 family medicine trainees per year starting in July 2026 (not funded in House budget);
 - \$500,000 for the **Medical Student Incentive Scholarship Program** that 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 (not funded in House budget).

These are not just budget line items. They are essential investments in the future health of Vermont. Please help ensure that every Vermonter, regardless of zip code, has access to high-quality, continuous care.

Thank you for your service and your commitment to the wellbeing of our state.

Sincerely,
Sarah Caffry
Waitsfield, Vermont
Medical Student, UVM Larner College of Medicine