

Dear respected Senate Appropriations Committee members,

In one short month, I will graduate from the Larner College of Medicine as a doctor. I am proud to say that I will be spending the next three years training as a family medicine resident. I am even prouder to say that after my residency training is complete, I will be returning to Vermont to give back to the State that gave so much to me. You see, I am two-time recipient of the Vermont State Medical Student Incentive Scholarship Program. This scholarship has brought me financial peace of mind and reduced my debt burden by over \$80,000 plus interest. Most importantly, it has made me feel valued and supported in my decision to pursue family medicine, which no matter how you slice it, has been an area far too undervalued for far too long.

Therefore, I am disappointed to learn that the Medical Student Incentive Scholarship Program is **not** currently funded in the House budget. I think the Committee would be making a grave mistake to underestimate its effect. It certainly has made a great impact on me, and it would pain me to see other bright students turn away from primary care fields because it just doesn't make good financial sense for them. Patients in Vermont will continue to suffer the consequences. They will continue to find it difficult to establish with a PCP and will become sicker as their chronic conditions are neglected. And when they finally become too sick to ignore it any further, their only option will be to seek care via the emergency room, which is absolutely the least cost-effective scenario for the State.

Patients in Vermont are relying on you to properly fund primary care. To that effect, I am asking you to please approve the following funding in support of primary care initiatives:

- \$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 (**currently underfunded** in House budget at \$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 (**currently 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 (**currently not funded** in House budget)
- And of course, \$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 (**currently not funded** in House budget)

Sincerely,

Shea Bellino of South Burlington, VT
Larner College of Medicine Class of 2025