

9/12/2023

Dear the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing;

I submit this testimony in support of PC4You legislation, S.750 and in support of the only proven health care intervention that can simultaneously **improve health, reduce expenses, and expand equity**. Is this the next health care moonshot? the next cancer therapy that costs millions of dollars, or the new AI-enabled surgical technique? It is none of those - It is primary care. And it works. However, it's also in crisis.

I am a Primary Care Physician and SVP at Firefly Health, a Massachusetts based health care start-up. We are working to solve the crisis through tech-enabled virtual first primary care teams providing accountable holistic health care. Our model has made the leap from visit based payment, also known as fee for service, to what this legislation is proposing, payment based on outcomes and caring for the individual. Let me paint the picture of what primary care is like today, and how we envision it could be different in the Commonwealth through the PC4You legislation.

Picture a devoted Primary Care physician ready to serve their community. This physician enters the field driven by a passion for healing, but their idealistic vision is swiftly shattered in their first clinic session. In the span of just eight minutes, they are tasked with unraveling the complex tapestry of not one, but 15 distinct medical concerns. And they need to do this again another 20 times in the day. This impossible situation has been aptly named "moral harm," and it is driving physicians away from the field of primary care.

The culprit of this grave situation is the fee-for-service structure that we have allowed to persist. It incentivizes the quick billing of visits while failing to address the genuine needs of our patients. High quality Primary Care should be a sanctuary of trust, not a race against the clock.

For the sanctity of Primary Care, for the very heart of our healthcare system to remain robust and vibrant, we must act decisively. We must allow Primary Care the flexibility to meet patients' needs beyond the confines of in-person visits. This flexibility includes asynchronous interactions and video visits, which can bring a ray of hope to both patients and providers alike. We have done this successfully where I work, at Firefly Health.

Consider the staggering impact of this shift in approach. By providing these alternative avenues of care, we can help those suffering from chronic conditions

like diabetes and depression. A mere glance at the statistics reveals that treating these conditions concurrently can lead to a remarkable 27% reduction in in-year medical expenses. We can extend life - communities that have 10 additional primary care physicians per 100,000 people experience an increase in life expectancy by 51.5 days.

Allow me to illustrate this transformative potential through the story of Dan—a 56-year-old night shift worker. Dan sought care due to persistent fatigue during his night shifts. His story may sound familiar to many, but his medical journey uncovered a crisis. Dan had diabetes, and his blood glucose levels were perilously high for most of the day and evening.

Through innovative measures, we equipped Dan with a continuous glucose monitor and connected him with a health coach who worked tirelessly to improve his insulin control and, consequently, his blood sugar levels. Progress was made, but the battle was not over. Dan's persistent mood issues revealed a hidden layer—he was suffering from depression.

Our team swiftly connected Dan with a therapist who provided therapy in tandem with carefully managed pharmacological treatments. In just six months, his blood glucose levels stabilized, and his depression was effectively treated, and most importantly - he no longer was falling asleep at work. Dan's medical story is not an isolated incident, it occurs daily across the Commonwealth. However, the health system we are all so proud of in Massachusetts more often than not cannot help people like Dan.

This narrative is but one example of the profound impact we can achieve by revamping our healthcare system. By embracing team based care, asynchronous interactions and video visits, we can pave the way for a brighter, more equitable future where healthcare professionals can truly heal, patients can receive the care they deserve, and costs are contained. Primary Care can be the foundation upon which our healthcare system is built, not the breaking point it has become.

I am here endorsing Massachusetts Primary Care for You (PC4You) Legislation (S750), a visionary plan that aligns with our mission. PC4You seeks to double investment in Primary Care, decrease health inequities, and transition to a monthly prospective payment model. Supported by an array of healthcare organizations and leaders, this legislation is a beacon of hope for healthcare reform.

As you think through the opportunities you are choosing to support, ask yourself this - would any of these add 51 extra days onto the life of my constituents? What

is the value of 51 days of life? We know the cost, and it is investment in primary care. I implore you to consider the urgent need for reform, not only through words but through action. Let us rally together and support the transformation of Primary Care and the adoption of PC4You. By doing so, we honor the tireless dedication of our healthcare heroes and ensure a brighter, healthier future for all.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Nisha Basu, MD MPH
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