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February 22, 2023

Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Legislative Office Building Room 101
33 N. State Street
Concord, NH 03301

RE: SB 263 extending the New Hampshire granite advantage health care program and reestablishing the commission to evaluate the effectiveness and future of the New Hampshire granite advantage health care program

Dear Chairman Birdsell and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

Bi-State Primary Care Association (Bi-State) and our members write to you today in strong support of SB 263 to permanently reauthorize the Granite Advantage Health Care Program during the 2023 legislative session.

Bi-State is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, formed by two health and social service leaders in 1986 to advance access to comprehensive primary care and preventive services for all, with special emphasis on those most in need in New Hampshire and Vermont. Bi-State represents 26 member organizations across both states that provide comprehensive primary care services to over 312,000 patients at 162 locations. Our members include federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), Free and Referral Clinics, New Hampshire Area Health Education Center programs, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, networks, and consortia. New Hampshire's 11 community health centers serve approximately 103,000 patients at locations across the state, including in those districts represented by the members of this esteemed committee.

The Granite Advantage Health Care Program provides over 90,000 adults with vital health care coverage, including preventative and primary care, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and diagnoses and treatment for diabetes, hypertension, and cancer. This program has been instrumental in expanding the state's substance use and mental health treatment capacity. Since the expansion of this program, the number of FQHC patients accessing substance use disorder services in New Hampshire has increased by 443%, and the number of patients receiving mental health treatment has increased by 100%. This service expansion is due in large part to the existence of the Granite Advantage Health Care Program. The program has also resulted in a dramatic reduction in uninsured rates and uncompensated care, which has allowed New Hampshire FQHCs to open new clinics, expand services, and hire additional staff to keep up with the volume of patient visits.

On behalf our Bi-State and our members, thank you for this opportunity to demonstrate our support for this critical program in preserving health care coverage for thousands in need. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like additional information at gmaheras@bistatepca.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'G' followed by 'm' and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Georgia J. Maheras, Esq.
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Bi-State Primary Care Association
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