



April 3, 2024

Senator Regina Birdsell, Chairwoman
Senate Health and Human Services
Legislative Office Building, Room 101
33 N. State Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: HB 1609 relative to the commission on the primary care workforce and the state office of rural health

Dear Chairwoman Birdsell and members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB 1609 relative to the Commission on the Interdisciplinary Primary Care Workforce Commission. Bi-State Primary Care Association and our members respectfully request your support of HB 1609. HB 1609 continues the important work of the Commission and makes minor technical changes.

Bi-State Primary Care Association is a non-profit organization that works to expand access to primary and preventive care for all New Hampshire residents. Bi-State's members include community health centers, federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), New Hampshire Area Health Education Center programs, clinics for the uninsured, networks, and consortia. Today, Bi-State represents 11 community health centers in New Hampshire that provide comprehensive primary care services to over 100,000 patients, including approximately 20,000 children. Approximately 36% of health center patients are commercially insured, 35% are insured by Medicaid, 19% are insured by Medicare, and approximately 10% are uninsured. The health centers provide primary and preventive care, reproductive health care, substance use disorder treatment, oral health services, behavioral health services, and more. New Hampshire's health centers treat all patients regardless of ability to pay or insurance status.

Bi-State works with federal, state, and regional health policy organizations, foundations, and payers to develop strategies, policies, and programs that provide and support community-based primary health care services in medically underserved areas. Our work includes partnering with the Commission on the Interdisciplinary Primary Care Workforce. Established in 2010, the Commission plays an integral role in developing policy changes to strengthen New Hampshire's health care workforce. Like Bi-State and the community health centers, its work includes special concern for rural and medically underserved areas and medically underserved populations in our state. We rely on the Commission to serve as the convener for health policy discussions that will move the State forward and design policies to meet the health care needs of Granite Staters.

The technical and clarifying language in section 3 of the bill will allow the State Office of Rural Health to accomplish the legislature's intent to collect and study workforce trends in New Hampshire. It is very important that policymakers have this information to make informed decisions.

For these reasons, we ask that you recommend HB 1609 ought to pass.

Thank you,

Kristine E. Stoddard, Esq.
Director of NH Public Policy
603-228-2830, ext. 113
kstoddard@bistatepca.org