



SPAN

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The Honorable John Lawn and The Honorable Cindy Friedman, Chairs

Massachusetts Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

24 Beacon St. Room 313 Boston, MA 02133

24 Beacon St. Room 236 Boston, MA 02133

Written **TESTIMONY: S.849** - Support if Amended

Dear Chairperson Lawn, Chairperson Friedman, and the members of the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Health Care Financing,

Students for Patient Advocacy Nationwide (SPAN) whole-heartedly supports **the intent** of S.849, which aims to establish health care as a right for all residents and lay the groundwork for a more equitable, comprehensive health care system. We recognize the importance of legislation that addresses gaps in coverage, affordability, and accountability particularly within Massachusetts' health care landscape. According to the 2023 Massachusetts Health Insurance Survey despite coverage being nearly universal, a staggering **41.3%** of residents reported that ***they or their families had difficulty affording health care.*** That's **40% of residents** struggling with costs, **even after insurance.** While we commend the efforts behind S.849, we respectfully request a specific amendment that would strengthen the bill's impact and ensure it fully serves the communities it intends to protect.

We are particularly concerned about the trigger mechanism described in Section (d), it stipulates that the single payer benchmark must outperform the total healthcare expenditures in **all three of the years: 2025, 2026, and 2027.** In order for the Health Policy Commission to submit a single payer benchmark proposal. Recognizing that healthcare costs can fluctuate year to year due to factors beyond the system's control, **SPAN recommends an amendment instead requiring the benchmark to outperform the total expenditures in 2/3 of the years instead of all three. leading to inconsistent reporting and ultimately undermining the bill's goal of ensuring accountability and transparency.** Without this change a single outlier year risks jeopardizing healthcare access for countless patients.


To address these concerns, we propose the following Amendment proposal: We propose amending **Section (d) of S.849** to change the stipulations of the bill's trigger mechanism. For example:

Replace: *outperformed the actual total health care expenditures in the commonwealth in 2025, 2026 and 2027*

With: *outperformed the actual total health care expenditures in the commonwealth in at least 2 of the years: 2025, 2026 and 2027*

We believe these changes will help ensure healthcare access for patients within Massachusetts, without falling victim to an outlier year skewing results, however The bill should still require 2 years of supporting data to reflect the needs of the citizens and not place an unnecessary healthcare cost burden upon them. SPAN urges the committee to consider this change before moving the bill forward. We are happy to provide additional input or support as needed.

Sincerely,

 **Shayan Saqib**
HS Ambassador, SPAN

 **Vishank Panchbhavi**
Collegiate Ambassador, SPAN

 **Joel Blessan**
Policy research Director, SPAN

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