



The University of Vermont

March 12, 2018

The Honorable Phil Scott  
Governor of Vermont  
109 State Street, Pavilion  
Montpelier, VT 05609

Dear Governor Scott:

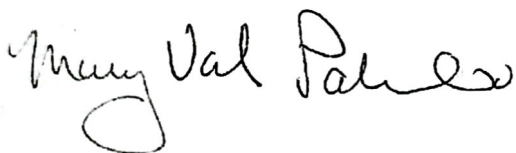
I am writing to submit my resignation from the Governor's Healthcare Workforce Workgroup (GHWW) which was established by Executive Order #07-13 on August 2013. I have served as co-chair of this group since its beginning and before that I was a member of the Vermont Healthcare Workforce Development Partnership from 2004- 2013 and chair from 2011-2013. I also served the state as a member of the Vermont Blue Ribbon Commission on Nursing from 2011-2013. I am a nurse educator, nurse workforce researcher, and a nurse practitioner caring for patients in The University of Vermont Medical Center Memory Program.

In addition to monitoring health workforce trends and needs, another charge of the GHWW is to "research and recommend to the Governor and the Secretary public and private opportunities for funding health workforce initiatives." The group's broad stakeholder membership includes state employees (a co-chair appointed by the Secretary of Administration), and non-state employees (a co-chair selected by the members). Historically, the state leaders appointed to this group did not restrict the non-state government members from any opportunity to provide input on policy, strategy, or budget issues directly related to developing, recruiting, and retaining Vermont's healthcare workforce. As we plan for FY19 programs and budget needs, that opportunity was not provided. In fact, input to the Governor from this assembled group of clinicians and workforce experts was recently discouraged. I believe that we have data, insight, perspective, and experience to share that would be informative to you and the administration. Our feedback does not align with the current AHS stance and budget proposal, and we are being silenced.

Specifically, the FY19 Governor's budget proposal eliminates the VT Educational Loan Repayment Program for Healthcare Professionals. Through this program, these professionals are required to deliver services in Vermont's rural areas and/or to disadvantaged populations, for a set period of time in exchange for a repayment contribution toward their educational loan debt. The FY18 program funding of \$667,000 consisted of \$306,000 in state funds; the remainder was federal match. The VT Educational Loan Repayment Program for Healthcare Professionals is a successful recruitment and retention program and necessary for Vermont to compete with other states for this highly sought workforce. Educational loan repayment awards include contractual service obligations; they are not "rewards" or "gifts." Awards are targeted to ensure access to care for Vermonters. Recruiting and retaining needed health care providers is an issue of healthcare access, not rewarding the individual provider.

If the GHWW does not have a collective opportunity to advise or comment on these important issues, there is no purpose for taking busy clinicians, educators, and workforce experts from their various organizations and responsibilities. The GHWW has been effective in the past in grant applications, demand modeling associated with the Vermont Healthcare Innovation Project, and monitoring supply and emerging trends in our healthcare workforce. However, at this time, the collective expertise of the group is not being appropriately used and I cannot see a way to alter this based on the current governmental control of discussions and actions. Therefore, I am choosing instead to dedicate myself to the emerging crisis in caring for the growing number of Vermonters with Alzheimer's Disease and hopefully designing a hub and spoke model for delivering this care. I might consider serving again in the future should this group's structure be reorganized to encourage an authentic stakeholder voice, thereby increasing its strategic value and effectiveness. Thank you for the opportunity to serve Vermont.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Val Palumbo". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Mary Val Palumbo DNP, APRN, GNP-BC  
Professor and Director of Interprofessional Education  
University of Vermont  
College of Nursing and Health Sciences

cc:

Secretary of Administration, Susanne R. Young  
AHS Secretary, Al Gobeille  
VDH Commissioner, Mark Levine  
GHWW Co-chair, Mary Kate Mohlman  
Members of the GHWW