

THE WOC COMMUNITY OF OPPORTUNITY™

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September 22, 2025

The Honorable Paul R. Feeney
Chairperson, Joint Committee on Financial Services
24 Beacon Street
Room 112
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable James M. Murphy
Chairperson, Joint Committee on Financial Services
24 Beacon Street
Room 254
Boston, MA 02133

Re: H.4162 An Act to Increase Access to Healthcare for Ostomy Patients

Dear Chairperson Feeney and Chairperson Murphy,

On behalf of the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society (WOCN), thank you for your consideration of H.4162, An Act to Increase Access to Healthcare for Ostomy Patients. As the primary healthcare providers for most patients with ostomies and fistulas, we believe this legislation is critical, and our organization strongly endorses H.4162.

Founded in 1968, the WOCN Society is a professional, international nursing organization of more than 5,600 healthcare professionals who specialize in the care of patients with wound, ostomy, and/or continence needs. As you may know, individuals with an ostomy or fistula face significant alterations in body function that require both physical and psychosocial adaptation. Wound, Ostomy, and Continence (WOC) specialty nurses provide a substantial portion of the continuum of care for these patients.

As clinicians, educators, researchers, consultants, and administrators, WOC nurses play a unique role in treating patients with ostomies and fistulas. We are acutely aware of the hardships these individuals face when insurers refuse to cover necessary supplies or when access to those supplies is limited.

Ostomy procedures are often essential for patients suffering from serious chronic or life-threatening illnesses such as colorectal cancer, bladder cancer, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, birth defects, or other intestinal and urinary conditions. Ostomies may also be required in cases of severe abdominal or pelvic trauma. Fistulas—abnormal tracts from internal organs to the outside of the body—cause uncontrolled drainage of stool, urine, or mucus and require many of the same supplies used in ostomy care to contain effluent, control odor, and protect the skin.



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Specialized care for persons with ostomies includes: preoperative evaluation, education and selection of the optimal site for the stoma (opening on the abdominal wall); facilitation of optimal self-care postoperatively; establishment of an effective prosthetic device for containing urine or stool; protection of the peristomal skin; and long-term patient education and counseling to support resumption of a productive lifestyle (e.g. guidance for managing the ostomy in the school or work setting, etc.). Care for fistula includes very similar comprehensive care although fistula is often spontaneous or post-surgical in nature.

Without reliable access to ostomy and fistula supplies, patients may experience uncontrolled leakage and severe skin complications, which often cost far more to treat than the supplies themselves. Patients without supplies may also face social stigma, isolation, depression, and loss of productivity. Caregivers, too, may lose productivity when caring for someone with an unmanaged ostomy or fistula. Having the proper supplies is the difference between resuming normal life and facing long-term social and health burdens. Advances in ostomy equipment and supplies have dramatically improved patient quality of life, but the vast majority of individuals with an ostomy or fistula will require pouching systems for waste collection for the rest of their lives.

H.4162 strengthens support for these patients by:

- Ensuring coverage and timely access to supplies, even if insurance coverage changes.
- Providing access to ostomy specialists such as WOC nurses.
- Supporting valid one-year prescriptions for supplies.
- Allowing provider validation of medically necessary supply quantities beyond standard limits.

These provisions will support patients, reduce provider paperwork, and improve continuity of care. The WOCN fully supports your efforts and strongly endorses H.4162. If we can be of assistance in any way, please contact Chris Rorick of the Society's staff at chris.rorick@polsinelli.com. Thank you for recognizing the importance of this issue and for your leadership in advancing this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

Christine Berke, MSN, APRN-NP, AGPCNP-BC, CWOCN-AP
President
Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurses Society™ (WOCN®)