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2 VERMONT MEDICAL SOCIETY RESOLUTION

3 VMS Support for Efforts to Minimize Cost Burden to Patients

4 *Adopted on October 25, 2008*

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6 WHEREAS, Distances to work and medical care are often long and public transportation
7 options are limited for most Vermonters; and

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9 WHEREAS, The increase in gas prices approaching \$4.00/gallon has seriously limited the
10 ability of Vermonters to travel to work, medical and other appointments; and

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12 WHEREAS, The average cost of heating oil has risen very significantly in the last 12 months;
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15 WHEREAS, Food prices continue to increase along with fuel prices; and

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17 WHEREAS, Older Vermonters are often on fixed incomes and are particularly vulnerable to
18 unexpected increases in their expenses; and

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20 WHEREAS, This financial crisis is forcing Vermonters to choose between eating well and
21 heating their homes and both seeking treatment for illness and paying for all aspects of their
22 medical treatment, including very high cost of medications; and

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24 WHEREAS, Only four out of 14 Vermont counties have an adequate supply of primary care
25 physicians and all other areas are experiencing serious or moderate shortages; and

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27 WHEREAS, Telephone or e-mail consultations may be appropriate when patients find it
28 difficult to drive to a physician's office; however, physicians are concerned that diagnosing and
29 treating patients solely by telephone could result in misdiagnosis and give rise to increased risk
30 of malpractice liability; and

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32 WHEREAS, Delays in medical treatment and failure to take necessary medications result in
33 more severe and costly illness; therefore be it

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35 **RESOLVED, That the VMS urges physicians and their staff to ask at-risk patients if**
36 **they are eating well and heating their homes; and be it further**

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38 **RESOLVED, That the VMS coordinate with local, state, and federal organizations (such**
39 **as the Vermont Food and Fuel Partnership, Vermont 211, Agency of Human Services**
40 **and the Area Health Education Centers) to provide practices with information for their**
41 **patients regarding heating oil assistance, public transportation and other available**
42 **resources; and be it further**

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44 **RESOLVED, That the VMS work with lawmakers, agencies and payers to increase the**
45 **options available to health care practitioners for treating patients, including but not**
46 **limited to use of telephone consultations and email communications as a means of**
47 **reducing the cost of travel where appropriate, recognizing that payers should reimburse**
48 **practitioners for their work.**