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### Preventive Healthcare in the Upper Peninsula

The Upper Peninsula is a beautiful place to live, offering beautiful forests, quiet towns, and stunning blue water of Lake Superior; however, there are downfalls in living in such a beautiful place. The Upper Peninsula (U.P.) is a rural region that requires its inhabitants to face unique challenges that those in bigger cities never have to consider. Increased travel demands and inadequate insurance coverage due to varying financial hurdles within these areas lead to many issues with people's participation in preventive medicine, collectively leading to worsening health conditions of the area's population. In the following paragraphs, these issues and their possible solutions will be discussed.

The Upper Peninsula contains 29% of Michigan's land area, yet only 3% of the population call this area home. Due to this, towns are widely spread out, making it challenging to distribute resources, including clinics and doctors, across several thousand square miles. Frequently residents of the U.P. have to travel anywhere from thirty minutes to three hours to see a doctor, making long travel a necessity for most. Fluctuating weather also plays a factor in travel plans due to the increased driving demands, in some cases impeding doctor appointments or deferring them all together. A solution to help offer preventive healthcare to the Upper Peninsula would be to increase satellite clinics' availability. Satellite clinics are where a doctor travels to other clinics that are not their primary location to see patients in other areas, giving access to healthcare professionals without traveling far distances. By providing these clinics, residents would have increased access to doctors they usually would not. These clinics could help the lack of preventive healthcare in the Upper Peninsula.

Due to high poverty rates in the Upper Peninsula, there is often a decreased utilization of preventative healthcare throughout the U.P. related to cost. Within Marquette county, only three

big suppliers give insurance to their employees: UP Health System Hospital, Northern Michigan University, and the mines. Out of the 311,361 citizens living in the Upper Peninsula, only those employed by these companies have easier access to the insurance everyone needs.

Inadequate insurance and cost of healthcare are huge contributing factors in decreased participation in preventive healthcare. A potential fix to this would be to have socialized healthcare. It would not be an easy fix by any means; however, it would potentially help most people, specifically those within rural areas such as the Upper Peninsula. This increased coverage could lower the cost of overall expenses in the long run for both patients and the government by allowing for a greater emphasis on preventive care rather than waiting for worsening of symptoms leading to higher medical costs.

I understand these solutions are not as easily achieved as compiling them on paper; however, with dedicated individuals' help, these problems can be solved. I hope to one day be one of these dedicated individuals. I have, for a while, wanted to become a Nurse Practitioner in the Upper Peninsula. Though my contribution to this problem won't solve the issues, I hope that my small dedication to the cause can help shift the problem closer to a more easily accessible preventive healthcare for those in rural areas such as the Upper Peninsula.