

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 2011

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education, and  
Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education, and  
Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby,

Community Health Centers have long been recognized as a proven solution to primary care access for the underserved. As a result and with the support of the Subcommittee and Presidents of both parties as well as Members on both sides of the aisle, Health Centers have been on an expansion path for over a decade and are now serving 23 million people who would otherwise not have access to primary care in their community. Recognizing the difficult task you face in preparing FY2012 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations legislation, **we respectfully ask that you continue to recognize that Health Centers strengthen primary care capacity while improving health outcomes and lowering costs.**

We know you are familiar with the unique features of the Health Center model. Health Centers are locally-controlled, nonprofit entities that deliver primary care, oral, behavioral, and pharmacy services in our most underserved rural and urban areas. Primary and preventive care provided in Health Centers has been demonstrated for decades to be cost-effective and high-quality – generating \$24 billion annually in savings to the health care system primarily due to their ability to reduce the need for patients to seek care in costlier health care. Health centers are open to all community residents regardless of their insurance status, and offer care on a sliding fee scale.

Through the Subcommittee's leadership, Health Centers now serve as the "health care home" to over 20 million patients. However, there are still 60 million Americans who lack access to primary care. Absent a health center presence in their communities, these Americans encounter significantly reduced or no access to primary care, instead delaying needed care and then later seeking it in settings that cost the health care system over \$1,200 per patient per year more than if they had a Health Center in their community. To meet the overwhelming demand for primary care in this country, we support investment in the most cost-effective means of promoting access to primary and preventive care services – the Health Centers program.

We deeply appreciate the Subcommittee's commitment to this important program, and look forward to working with you this year to continue the appropriate investment in our nation's Health Centers. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Debbie Stabenow

John Boozman

Patrick Leahy

Mark R. B. A

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

John J. Kerry

Jim Webb  
Dean Heller

Olympia Snowe  
Chris Coons

Mark Begich

Loul Leno

Tom Udall

Barbara Mikulski

Robert Menendez

Jack Reel

Richard Blumenthal

Kay R. Hagan

Max Baucus

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Jim Latta  
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Tom Carper

John Cornyn

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Kent Conrad

Susan Collins

Al Franken

Jeffrey A. Merkley

Maria Cantwell

Mark Udall

Dick Lugar

Frank R. Lautenberg

Chuck Schumer

Herb Kohl

Barack Obama

Jim Johnson

Daniel K. Akaka

Ben Cardin

