

Congress Must Act Soon to Prevent a 70% Cut in Community Health Center Funding

9 Million People Could Lose Health Care

Background

Thanks to targeted investments made by Congress, Community Health Centers (CHCs) now serve more than **25 million patients in nearly 10,000 communities in every state and U.S. Territory**. CHCs are unique: they are required to serve the underserved, provide services to all, and many patients pay a portion of the cost based on a sliding fee scale.

CHC funding comes from two sources: **annual discretionary appropriations** and the mandatory **Health Centers Fund**, which is **only funded through September 2017**.

The Facts

- Health centers are efficient and **save the health care system billions of dollars every year** through reductions to inpatient hospitalizations and ER use. Patients served by health centers have **24% lower total Medicaid costs** than patients served in other settings.
- Beyond primary medical care, health centers provide additional and integrated services on-site – **82% now offer mental health and/or substance abuse treatment, 76% offer oral health, and the majority offer discounted pharmaceutical services**. Continued investment will ensure every health center can be a “one-stop-shop” for patient care.
- The federal investments that support the health center system of care must be **sustained and stabilized** to ensure access to care is not terminated. Recognizing this, Congress has consistently supported the Health Centers Program through annual appropriations and, in 2015, voted **to reauthorize the Health Centers Fund for 2 years**.

The Impact

Without action by Congress before September 30th, health centers will face a devastating **70% cut in grant funds**. The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that this “funding cliff” will lead to closure of **2,800 health center sites, 51,000 layoffs** of clinicians and other personnel, and **loss of access for more than 9 million patients nationwide**.

Our Request

To ensure that these critical front-line providers can continue to provide care in their communities, we request that Members:

1. **Support FY18 appropriations for health centers** by signing the **Bilirakis-Green letter** in the House and the **Wicker-Stabenow letter** in the Senate. Also, in Individual request letters, we ask that Members request **level discretionary funding (\$1.5 billion); and**
2. **Act well before September 30th to extend the Health Centers Fund for at least five years** so that CHCs are able to maintain services, and recruit and retain needed health care professionals. Congress renewed the fund on a bipartisan basis in 2015.

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Questions? Email federalaffairs@nachc.org



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
Community Health Centers