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