United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 19, 2017

Senator Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray,

We write today to share our strong support for community health centers and to urge swift resolution to the funding cliff community health centers face at the end of the month. Community health centers serve a critical role in communities throughout the United States and are important safety net providers. If Congress allows the Community Health Centers Fund (CHCF) to lapse, it would immediately threaten patient access to the cost-effective primary and preventive care health centers provide. We respectfully request you take immediate action to address CHCF funding.

Community health centers have long enjoyed strong bipartisan support. Since their initial creation over fifty years ago, community health centers have been a critical component of the nation's primary care network, today serving approximately 26 million patients at over 10,000 sites throughout the United States. Community health centers operate in both rural and urban areas, in every state in the nation, and are an important part of the health care ecosystem of their communities. Last year, health centers were the medical home for one in twelve Americans, one in ten children, one in six Americans living in rural areas, and more than 330,000 of our nation's veterans.

Congress' previous investments in the community health center program have yielded real results and vastly improved the health and well-being of countless communities throughout the United States. Without extension of the CHCF, community health centers will lose seventy percent of their funding. This will result in an estimated 2,800 site closures, the loss of 50,000 jobs, and result in 9 million Americans losing their access to care. Along with the health center impact, the National Health Service Corps and the Teaching Health Centers Graduate Medical Education programs are at risk of expiry. As small businesses, health centers need predictability to secure financing for capital projects, to sign contracts, to recruit and retain providers and staff, and to sustain operations. We are already hearing of the disruptive effects of the uncertainty created by the impending funding cliff on health center operations—this disruption will increase significantly without an extension of funding by September 30.

We believe the strong bipartisan support the community health center program receives every year is a strong indicator of the importance of the program to the nation. We stand ready to work with you to ensure that the CHCF continues to be a vibrant program that has improved the health and well-being of many of our nation's most vulnerable individuals and communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our thoughts. We stand ready to work with you to fund the community health center program to ensure no losses in health care access for the millions of Americans served by community health centers.

Sincerely,

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Roy Blunt
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

John Boozman
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Mike Crapo
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Dean Heller
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Bill Cassidy
United States Senator

Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senator

Thad Cochran
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Cory Gardner
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Rob Portman
United States Senator

Claire McCaskill
United States Senator

Dan Sullivan
United States Senator

Bill Nelson
United States Senator

John Barrasso
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Deb Fischer
United States Senator

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Steve Daines
United States Senator

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

Thom Tillis
United States Senator

Joe Donnelly
United States Senator

David Perdue
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

James E. Risch
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Tom Udall
United States Senator

Angus S. King Jr.
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

John Hoeven
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

John Kennedy
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

James M. Inhofe
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

James Lankford
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Michael B. Enzi
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Al Franken
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

Cc:
Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer