

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Health Center Colleague:

The overflow turnout at the NACHC Policy and Issues Forum (P&I) in March reflected the tremendous spirit and energy behind the Health Center Movement. From across the country, nearly 3,000 health center leaders and advocates assembled in the nation's capital to give voice to their patients and communities and to ensure that our lawmakers preserve and strengthen a vibrant, community-based primary care health system for America.

During the P&I some 400 congressional offices were visited. We had the opportunity to reach out to Representatives and Senators and tell our compelling health center stories about how our work and model of care is making a difference improving lives — reducing health disparities — and helping communities meet vexing health issues such as opioid addiction. Moreover, our message was reinforced by the release of a new NACHC report, “Strengthening the Safety Net,” that makes the case that while the debate over insurance coverage is important, the question of ensuring access to quality and affordable primary care is equally important.

All of us recognize there is much uncertainty ahead as the debate on health reform continues and as Congress makes critical decisions related to national priorities, including health center funding and Medicaid. These decisions will have a direct impact on our ability to do our jobs — to sustain and grow a primary care workforce — and to deliver needed health care to the millions who depend upon us.

Our goal going forward is to continue to make the strongest case possible for health centers. In today's challenging environment, it is absolutely imperative that the country fully understands the value of health centers and what they mean to communities. We must ensure that the nation sees health centers as a constructive solution to keeping health care costs down while assuring access to primary care for everyone.

As stated at the P&I, despite unprecedented challenges, I believe there is reason to be confident. The progress we have made and the bipartisan support we have earned over the years for our programs have put us in a strong position. Frankly, I doubt there is any domestic program that has proven to deliver greater returns than our health centers on the public investment made in them — in order to achieve the goals of better health and savings in health care.

Sincerely,



J. Ricardo Guzman, LMSW, MPH
Chair of the Board
National Association of Community Health Centers



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