

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Health Center Colleague:

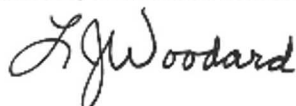
At our recent NACHC Policy and Issues Forum, we were honored to receive messages from Vice President Kamala D. Harris and congressional leaders from both political parties lauding the work and role of health centers in combatting the coronavirus that continues to threaten the nation's health and economy. Vice President Harris stated: "The President and I know race and place can matter – a lot – in how well a person is protected from this virus...Our administration sees Community Health Centers as true partners in the fight against COVID-19 and as essential partners ensuring an equitable response."

We have been through turbulent times. During this COVID crisis and social injustices, we have had to face unprecedented challenges to keep our centers open, to maintain staff and to ensure the delivery of needed care to our patients. It has been all of us together sharing information, collecting data, telling our story, and learning from each other that has made us stronger. Health centers learned that "the race isn't given to the swift, but to those who endure." And, I will add those who can be flexible and resilient; and those who see the true need of populations needing to be reached not by traditional methods.

We take pride in our achievements. We have been placed at the forefront of the Administration's strategy to ensure both vaccine access and equitable distribution in communities hard hit by the virus and among vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations. Health centers have been included in all major COVID relief packages, including the new American Rescue Plan which includes targeted funding of \$7.6 billion for health centers (to include Look-alikes) and significant resources for workforce. We have been called to the table not only by the Administration but lawmakers, the CDC, HRSA and others who see us as invaluable partners offering solutions to critical health problems. And, as never before, we have moved the nation to see the value of a community-based health system to better protect communities in the event of public health disasters, and above all to ensure equity in the nation's health system.

Based on our achievements, we have a unique opportunity ahead to advance our mission and to build an even stronger community-based delivery system of primary care for the nation. And, as we pause to recognize the 50th Anniversary Year of the National Association of Community Health Centers, as Board Chair, I express my deep gratitude to all of you for your incredible work and the compassion and commitment you have shown even when your personal lives were being impacted. You are all heroes. And thanks to all for working together as the NACHC family in supporting each other through partnerships, collaborations, networking and coordinating our roles to ensure our health centers remain strong in their mission of social justice and health equity. I must also applaud our health center boards. They have had to expand their roles not just in the governance of their health centers but in addressing as community ambassadors COVID testing and vaccine hesitancy.

Going forward, let us all remember: Our strength and success continues to rest in a strong and united national voice (NACHC) where together all of us can bring forth the ideas and innovations to improve health and make a difference in the lives of the patients we serve, our boards and staff.



Lathran Johnson Woodward
Chair of the Board
National Association of Community Health Centers



Lathran J. Woodward

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