

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin and Ranking Member Capito:

We thank the Subcommittee for your continued support and recognition of America's Community Health Centers (CHCs) as a longstanding, bipartisan solution to the primary care access problems facing this country. As you proceed with the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Appropriations process, we respectfully request that the Subcommittee **provide robust funding for Community Health Centers** within the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies legislation for FY25. This will ensure health centers remain providers of high-quality, cost-effective primary care and continue to provide innovative, high-value health services to medically underserved communities across the nation.

Since the first health centers opened their doors more than fifty years ago, they have proven to be a worthwhile investment, providing quality and affordable primary and preventive care, dental, behavioral health, substance use disorder, pharmacy, vision, and a variety of complementary services to America's most vulnerable patients and medically-underserved communities. Today, thanks to longstanding bipartisan support in Congress, there are nearly 1,500 health center organizations with over 15,000 sites in every state and U.S. territory. Forty-one percent of health center patients are in small towns and rural communities. Health centers are the medical home for over 31.5 million patients – or one in every eleven Americans – including almost nine million children and nearly 400,000 veterans.

Each year, health centers save the overall health system more than \$24 billion due to reduced emergency room visits and hospitalizations. Furthermore, health centers create over 500,000 jobs – generating nearly \$85 billion in direct and indirect economic activity in local communities. We would also highlight recent findings affirming that health centers' unique comprehensive primary care model reduces costs for Medicare and Medicaid. Earlier this year, the Congressional Budget Office affirmed that federal investments in Community Health Centers lowers government overall spending by reducing unnecessary emergency department visits, in-patient hospitalizations, and expensive outpatient procedures. A strong commitment to health center funding will allow more patients to access health centers' cost-effective model of care and maximize savings to public insurance programs.

CHCs are proud to have had strong bipartisan support for over five decades. Congress funds health centers on a bipartisan basis through the annual appropriations process combined with base funding through the CHC Fund. With the CHC Fund set to expire on December 31st, 2024, we urge you to minimize uncertainty and support health centers' work to meet the growing demand for affordable primary care by providing robust discretionary funding in FY25.

Finally, robust funding is essential for health centers to address primary care workforce shortages. Health centers are proud of their employees' commitment to the mission of providing care to vulnerable patient populations. Still, additional resources are necessary to ensure that safety-net providers can compete in a tight labor market. Health centers are already leading the way in growing their own primary care workforce in communities across the country through partnerships with local schools and community colleges, new preceptorship training-to-practice models, and career laddering programs. Your Committee's support for health centers will grow these programs, alleviate workforce shortages, and improve economic opportunity in underserved communities across the country.

As Congress works to improve access to care, reduce health care spending, and promote patient-centered solutions to our health care challenges, we urge the Subcommittee to continue robust support for CHCs – and their demonstrated record of success. Thank you for your continued support.

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