*Please fill in the highlighted sections with information about your health center and email the letter to his/her congressional office in Washington DC. Please send a copy of this letter via e-mail to* *advocacy@healthplusadvocates.org**. You may contact Andrea Chavez at* *andrea@healthplusadvocates.org* *or (916) 503-9130 with any questions or comments.*

Date

The Honorable FIRST LAST

DISTRICT, California

Member of Congress

STREET ADDRESS

CITY, ST ZIP

Dear Representative LAST:

On behalf of [INSERT HEALTH CENTER] and the XXXX patients we serve, I write today to urge you to **support stable funding for community health centers**.

Health centers are funded by two sources: annual discretionary appropriations and mandatory funding, which expires at the end of the fiscal year on September 30, 2017. Historically, Congress has voted on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis to extend both of these funding streams, which support health center operations, care for the uninsured, and the cost of services (such as translation, transportation, and health education) not typically covered by insurance.

It is imperative that you act swiftly to extend the mandatory portion of the Health Center Fund on a long-term basis to reduce instability and uncertainty for health center patients and clinicians, and to ensure targeted new investments in access to care. Without action from Congress before September 30th, health centers will face a devastating 70% cut in grant funding. The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that this “funding cliff” will lead to a closure of 2,800 health center sites, 51,000 layoffs of clinicians and other personnel, and loss of access to care for more than 9 million patients nationwide. At [INSERT YOUR HEALTH CENTER NAME], we will lose [INSERT NUMBER loss of funds] and will [INSERT IMPACT – i.e. reduce hours, cut services].

Health centers save the health care system billions of dollars every year through reductions to inpatient hospitalizations and ER use. These savings also impact taxpayers: patients served by health centers have 24% lower total Medicaid costs than patients served in other settings. In addition to serving more people and more communities, health centers provide additional services on-site– 82% now offer mental health and/or substance abuse treatment, 76% offer oral health services, and 40% have onsite pharmacies. Continued investment is needed to make each health center an integrated “one-stop-shop” for patient care. Federal investments that support the health center system of care must be sustained and stabilized to ensure access to care is not disrupted. Recognizing this, Congress voted to reauthorize the Health Centers Fund for 2 years in 2015, and has consistently supported the Health Centers program through annual appropriations.

For more than 50 years, there has been bipartisan support for community health centers’ mission and model. Health centers are an asset to health systems at the local, state and federal level – serving on the front lines of nearly every challenge affecting the national health care system – from access to care for veterans to the opioid epidemic. Thanks to specific, targeted investments made by Congress, health centers now serve more than 25 million patients in nearly 10,000 communities nationwide. In California, health centers serve 6.2 million people – that’s 1 in 7 Californians.

To further this conversation and help you learn more about our health center and the people who depend on us for health care, we would be honored to invite you for a tour of our health center at your convenience and will call your office to coordinate. Please feel free to contact us at E-MAIL or PHONE if you have any questions or comments.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this letter and for your continued support of community health centers.

Sincerely,

NAME

TITLE

 cc: CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates (advocacy@healthplusadvocates.org)