

Investing in Community Health

Strengthening and Sustaining Community Health Centers through Strategic Investment

Our Goal:

Patient-Centered Investment in Community Health Centers that Expands Access, Drives Quality Improvement and Achieves Cost Savings

Background

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. Thanks to specific, targeted investments made by Congress during **both the George W. Bush and Obama administrations**, health centers now serve more than **24 million patients in more than 9,000 communities nationwide**.

Health centers are funded by two sources: **annual discretionary appropriations** and the **Health Centers Fund**, which is currently funded through the next fiscal year. 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, health education) not typically covered by insurance.

The Facts

- Health centers **save the health care system an estimated \$24 billion every year** through reductions to inpatient hospitalizations and ER use.
- In addition to serving more people and communities, health centers continue to offer additional services on-site— **81% now offer mental health and/or substance abuse treatment, 77% offer oral health, and 40% offer pharmacy**. Continued investment is needed to make each health center an integrated “one-stop shop” for patient care.
- Though some health center patients have gained insurance, this doesn't automatically translate into meaningful access to care. Health centers are serving **a large number of under-insured patients**, as well as those who remain uninsured.
- The 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.

Our Request

To ensure that health centers remain strong and stable, we request that Members:

1. **Support Health Centers in the FY17 annual appropriations process** by signing the **Bilirakis-Green letter** in the House and the **Wicker-Stabenow letter** in the Senate. We also ask that Members request **level discretionary funding (\$1.5 billion)** in individual request letters.
2. Commit to taking action well before the September 2017 deadline to **make the Health Centers Fund permanent** and reduce the uncertainty caused by year-by-year renewals of this critical investment in access to care.