**Fix the Funding Cliff**

Word Count: 463

The waiting room of our Community Health Center is thousands of miles from the U.S. Capitol, but what happens under that dome is affecting our patients’ health.

Right now as part of the Health Centers Program, [NAME OF YOUR HEALTH CENTER], is subject to program funding cut of 70 percent that took effect October 1. We have to make hard choices to save costs and keep our doors open. [USE THIS SPACE TO DESCRIBE HOW THE FUNDING CLIFF IS AFFECTING YOUR HEALTH CENTER NOW]. Our health center is not alone. The federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) itself has projected that the impact of the funding cliff will result in the closure of 2,800 health center locations, elimination of more than 50,000 jobs, and a loss of access to care for more than 9 million patients. The disruption is already evident. More than 70 percent of health centers recently surveyed said they will institute a hiring freeze, and nearly half (43 percent) say they will cut services, according to a recent survey by the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) as a result of the health center funding cliff cut. The irony is there is broad agreement in Congress that a cliff fix is needed and a path forward has been set. Lawmakers in the House and Senate have introduced bipartisan legislation to extend funding for health centers and other programs. But we’re up against a host of factors that include a ticking clock and a busy legislative calendar.

Why should this matter? Because health centers like ours save lives. At [NAME OF YOUR HEALTH CENTER] we are part of a nationwide network that started more than 50 years ago to provide quality primary care in places where doctors and services were scarce or non-existent. We are the family doctor to more than 27 million Americans in communities all over the country, 1 in 12 Americans. We provide affordable access to primary care and help reduce the incidence of chronic disease in the most challenging rural and urban communities all over America. Our patients have a more affordable option for preventive care than a hospital emergency room, a fact which allows us to collectively generate $24 billion in health care cost savings. We are also innovators, working with community partners to respond to public health crises, such as the opioid epidemic and the recent hurricanes that struck Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico.

There is little doubt that health centers have contributed significantly to cost savings for the American taxpayer. Our record of success is why our program draws bipartisan support from U.S. presidents and lawmakers. Sadly, such broad support may not be enough to help us now.

Let’s hope our leaders in Congress get legislation passed to fix the cliff – and soon. Our nation’s health depends on it.