

October xx, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick McHenry  
Speaker Pro Tempore  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pro Tempore McHenry, and  
Minority Leader Jeffries,

We the undersigned, including national health care organizations, state primary care associations, and community health centers, write today to urge you to take final action on a bipartisan investment that has wide support across both parties and chambers in Congress: increased funding for federally qualified health centers (FQHCs).

We are grateful for the temporary extension of the mandatory Community Health Center Fund included in H.R.5860, *the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2024 and Other Extensions Act*, which otherwise would have lapsed on September 30. This extension reflects Congress' recognition that FQHCs provide vital, life-saving services in their communities, and cannot afford to go a day without federal support.

We also greatly appreciate the work undertaken in both the House and the Senate to find bipartisan consensus on funding increases for health centers. Both the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Senate Health, Labor, Education, and Pensions (HELP) Committee have reported out bipartisan CHC Fund reauthorizations that meaningfully increase funding for community health centers. Further, the *Lower Costs, More Transparency Act*, H.R. 5378, a bipartisan health care package from the House Committees on Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, and Education and Workforce, also reauthorizes the health center fund with a significant increase in funding.

At this time of unprecedented financial challenges for health centers, it is critical that the Community Health Center Fund be reauthorized at the highest possible level. As you consider final funding levels for the health care programs that need to be reauthorized this year, **we urge you to reauthorize the Community Health Center Fund using the funding levels included in the Senate HELP Committee's *Bipartisan Primary Care and Health Workforce Act, S. 2840***. This investment of \$5.8 billion per year for three years has the greatest potential to sufficiently support patient care, shore up struggling health centers, and set our country on a path to improved health for all communities.

With robust, stable, predictable funding, FQHCs can truly transform their communities. Sophisticated interdisciplinary care teams provide the gold standard of primary care to all who seek it, regardless of ability to pay, meeting patients' clinical and social needs in order to help them lead healthy and productive lives.

Increased sustained funding will also result in an even higher return on investment to the federal government. Across several metrics, FQHCs are the best investment you can make in health care. In 2021, community health centers were estimated to save a total of \$25.3 billion for the Medicaid and Medicare programs.<sup>1</sup> In 2019, community health centers generated \$63.4 billion in economic activity, of which \$32 billion were indirect economic impacts generated from supporting local businesses.<sup>2</sup> For every dollar of federal funding invested in community health centers, \$11 is generated in total economic activity through increased spending on related health service expenses, food services, transportation, construction, and more.<sup>3</sup>

**Unfortunately, continued uncertainty around the level and duration of a reauthorization of the Community Health Center Fund is already harming health centers and their patients.** In addition to addressing ongoing mental health and maternal mortality crises and steadily increasing patient populations, FQHCs are facing an ongoing workforce shortage, continued erosion of 340B program savings, and loss of coverage for millions of patients due to Medicaid program redeterminations, which is resulting in declining revenue for health centers. Without the backstop of the Community Health Center Fund, health centers would be forced to close sites, lay off staff, and cut back service hours. Without the certainty that this Fund will be available in the coming years, it is more difficult to finance large projects or engage in meaningful long-term planning.

Amidst difficult negotiations on a number of pressing issues, securing a significant, sustained increase for health centers is one issue that everyone – Democrats and Republicans, Senators and Representatives - can agree on, meaningfully benefiting patients, communities, and our nation's health.

Once again, we urge you to reauthorize the Community Health Center Fund at \$5.8 billion annually for three years. For more information or to discuss this further, please direct your staff to contact Stephanie Krenrich, SVP for Policy and Government Affairs at Advocates for Community Health, at [skrenrich@advocatesforcommunityhealth.org](mailto:skrenrich@advocatesforcommunityhealth.org).

Sincerely,

<signers>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Nocon (Kaiser Permanente Bernard J. Tyson School of Medicine). "Testimony on Community Health Centers: Saving Lives, Saving Money before the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee." (March 02, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> "Community Health Centers Are Economic Engines" (National Association of Community Health Centers, October 2020), <https://www.nachc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Economic-Impact-Infographic-2.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Health Centers Provide Cost Effective Care" (National Association of Community Health Centers, July 2015), [http://nachc.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/06/Cost-Effectiveness\\_FS\\_2015.pdf](http://nachc.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/06/Cost-Effectiveness_FS_2015.pdf).