Next Stimulus Package Must Include Community Health Center Fund Reauthorization

An immediate long-term reauthorization of the Community Health Center Fund is needed to stabilize a critical system of care for vulnerable communities – especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community Health Centers are requesting a 5-year reauthorization of the Community Health Center Fund with related workforce programs to serve increasing numbers of unemployed, uninsured, and underinsured people.

WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER FUND?

The Community Health Center Fund is a mandatory funding stream of $4 billion per year that accounts for 70% of the federal grant funding for health centers and is now set to expire on November 30, 2020.

WHY IS ACTION TO REAUTHORIZE THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER FUND SO IMPORTANT NOW?

Health centers are vital partners who can conduct massive community testing during the COVID-19 recovery. When a vaccine is ready and available, Community Health Centers will be key in reaching vulnerable populations hard hit by the virus in both urban and rural areas and helping to get the American economy back to work and back on track.

Long-term, stable federal investment supporting the health center system of care is essential to ensuring health centers’ meet operational needs, recruit and retain staff and expand needed services for patients.

Currently health centers are experiencing massive revenue losses – 70-80% for many centers as a result of the pandemic. To date, 2,073 sites have temporarily closed. Six-month impact estimate: 34 million fewer visits, $7.6 billion lost revenue, 100,500 lost jobs.

Health centers depend on Congress to act NOW to provide stable, long-term reauthorization as part of the next stimulus package. With much uncertainty on the horizon, no one knows if Congress or the Administration will have the will or the funds and “pay-fors,” for a reauthorization deal by November 30. The time to act is NOW!
While health centers have received limited aid from Congress toward COVID-19, it is a fraction of what is needed to address the pandemic and is not a substitute for another delayed reauthorization.

Community Health Centers are Requesting $77.3 Billion in Stimulus #4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Funding Request</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COVID-19 Emergency</strong></td>
<td>$7.6 Billion over 6 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reauthorize the Community Health Center Fund to stabilize services and care for the newly uninsured</td>
<td>$41.9 Billion over 5 years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Workforce expansion</strong></td>
<td>$7.8 Billion over 5 years</td>
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<td>to address the shortfall—add 50,000 clinicians</td>
<td>$20 Billion over 5 years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Infrastructure investment</strong>, including telehealth development, IT systems and future emergency preparedness</td>
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**WORKFORCE PROGRAMS ARE CRITICAL TO THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER FUND REAUTHORIZATION**

Prior to COVID-19, workforce shortages were estimated by HRSA of up to 160,000 physicians and one million nurses by 2025. Nationwide, there are more than 7,000 designated Health Professions Shortage Areas lacking adequate primary care. Sixty percent are in rural areas.

Apart from renewing these programs at current levels, COVID-19 has demonstrated how important it is for health centers to attract and retain clinicians to:

- handle the current emergency and testing needs roll-out vaccination campaigns as soon as available;
- attend to the backlog of primary care needed for current patients;
- care for the flood of newly unemployed and newly uninsured; and
- build capacity and readiness for the next emergency or disaster.

**COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS, A RESPONSIBLE FEDERAL INVESTMENT**

Community Health Centers are efficient and save the health care system over $24 billion every year, reducing unnecessary hospitalizations and emergency room use. In addition, they generate $54.6 billion in total economic activity and bring 236,000 direct jobs to poor and challenged communities.

Health centers guarantee access to high-quality care, improve health outcomes and reduce health disparities.

Learn more about Community Health Centers and their efforts to keep communities healthy at www.nachc.org.

April 30, 2020