

SIGN ON BY APRIL 23: FY22 Community Health Center Appropriations Letter

Dear Colleague:

Please join Senators Stabenow and Wicker in sending the attached letter encouraging the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies to continue support for the Health Centers Program in FY2022.

Community Health Centers are locally-controlled, non-profit entities that provide primary care, dental care, behavioral health, and pharmacy services in our most underserved rural and urban areas. There are over 1,400 health center organizations serve more than 13,000 urban and rural communities in every state and U.S. Territory. Health Centers are the health care home for over 30 million patients -- or one in every twelve people -- including 9 million children and over 400,000 veterans. Furthermore, health centers employ over 253,000 people, generate \$63.4 billion dollars in economic impact for local communities, and provide cost savings for the nation's overall health care system.

CHCs have also played a key role in the pandemic, providing much-needed testing, contact tracing, education, and now vaccinations in communities hardest hit by the deadly disease. Approximately 98% of CHCs can test for the coronavirus, with 81% of those health centers operating walk-up or drive-up testing options. These providers are trusted voices in the community and with access to hard-to-reach populations. Forty-seven percent of patients tested self-identified as racial and/or ethnic minorities, and 42% live in rural areas.

Please contact Sally Farrington with Sen. Wicker at Sally_Farrington@wicker.senate.gov or Amy Brown with Sen. Stabenow at amy_brown@stabenow.senate.gov to sign the letter.

The Deadline to sign on is Friday, April 23.

Sincerely,

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Roger Wicker
United States Senator

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The Honorable Patty Murry
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

We want to thank the Subcommittee for your continued support and recognition of Community Health Centers as a longstanding bipartisan solution to the primary care access problems facing this country. As you proceed with the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Appropriations process, we respectfully request that the Subcommittee provide strong funding for Community Health Centers within the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies legislation for FY 2022. This will ensure health centers can continue providing high-quality, cost-effective primary care and innovative health services to underserved communities across the nation.

Since the first Community Health Centers opened their doors more than 50 years ago, they have provided quality and affordable care to those most in need. Today, thanks to longstanding bipartisan support in Congress, there are now more than 1,400 health center organizations serving more than 13,000 urban and rural communities in every state and U.S. territory. Health Centers are the main source of care for roughly 30 million patients, including nine million children and 400,000 veterans. These centers employ 253,000 people, generate \$63.4 billion in economic impact for local communities, and provide cost savings for the nation's overall health care system.

For the past decade, Congress has supported health centers on a bipartisan basis through the annual appropriation for the Health Center program, combined with investments in the mandatory Community Health Center Fund. With the Health Center Fund set at level funding for FY 2022, we urge you to prioritize funding for health centers in FY 2022. This funding is critical to the success of health centers as they work to meet growing demand for affordable care and respond to the changing needs of their communities—whether helping fight flu outbreaks, providing HIV/AIDS prevention care, addressing rising maternal mortality rates, or offering opioid addiction treatment.

Health centers have played a significant role in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, providing much-needed testing, contact tracing, education, and now vaccinations in communities hardest hit by the deadly disease. Approximately 98 percent of these centers can test for the virus, with 81 percent operating walk-up or drive-up testing options. These providers are trusted voices in their communities with access to hard-to-reach populations. Forty-seven percent of patients who receive testing at these centers are racial and ethnic minorities, and 42 percent live in rural areas.

Almost one year into this crisis, Community Health Centers continue to play an essential role in fighting the pandemic. In fact, both the previous and current Administrations have said health centers would be expected to play an increased role in administering COVID-19 vaccinations. These centers are ready to do their part, but federal resources are needed to keep their doors open so they can continue delivering care. For many health centers, cash reserves have rapidly depleted and the situation is now critical. As of January 2021, 633 health centers

had closed temporarily because of COVID-19. Communities need these centers open in order to keep up the pace with our national vaccination effort.

As Congress works to improve access to care, improve efficiency, and promote patient-centered health care solutions, we urge the Subcommittee to continue providing strong support for Community Health Centers. Their need of federal assistance is greater than ever.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,