

Talking Points Our Path Forward

- Led by our community and working with our partners in Sacramento and Washington DC, California's community health centers have sought and realized innovative solutions to meet the unique needs of Californians. Piece by piece, program by program, we have built a system of care that ensures access to affordable, high quality care for every Californian. A system that makes us proud.
- Thanks to our work, people are healthier. Communities are healthier. Parents can go to work, children can go to school, and tens of thousands of healthcare workers have good jobs that provide for their families.
- California's community health centers serve nearly 6 million patients each year, which is 1 in 7 Californians. Of those, 2 million are children and 78% live below or near the poverty line.
- Health center key services include primary medical care, behavioral health, oral health, pharmacy, vision, health education, care coordination, enrollment counseling, and other services are all delivered under one roof.
- With the support of both Democratic and Republican leaders, Health Centers have grown from a small demonstration project under President Johnson, to a fully authorized program under President Ford, to the centerpiece of a successful Presidential expansion initiative under President George W. Bush.
- President Obama, recognizing the value of community health centers and their ability to provide high quality, cost-effective healthcare to our most vulnerable communities, expanded the number of health centers in California and ensured that more patients had health insurance through Covered California and the Medicaid expansion. He also created important workforce programs, like Teaching Health Centers, that expand the number of primary care physicians nation-wide.
- Policymakers have long recognized Health Centers' value on a bipartisan basis, and have made investments through Republican and Democratic administrations. Two years ago, Congress voted on a bipartisan basis to expand Health Centers, specifically requiring new sites and services. One year ago, they extended the Health Center Trust Fund to protect health center programs.
- Today, according to a study by the California HealthCare Foundation (CHCF), safety-net clinics are providing care to 54 percent, or 1.3 million, new patients enrolled in California's Medicaid managed care plans after the Medicaid expansion.

- Some of the conversations around healthcare right now are very concerning, and if advanced, could have devastating impacts on millions of people served by community health centers.
- If the healthcare exchanges and the Medicaid expansion are rolled back, millions of people from our most vulnerable communities will once again be uninsured.
- If Congress block grants Medicaid, the safety-net as we know it will be unrecognizable. At a minimum, Medicaid Block Grants will require very difficult decisions by our elected leaders about who deserves care, the quality of care they will receive, and who will left behind.
- We are committed to providing healthcare to everyone, that is our mission and we will stick to it. But, we don't feel it is in the best interest of California to return to our not so distant past where people are forced to make impossible decisions like whether to pay for food, shelter, or medication. Sick people will remain sick. People in pain will remain in pain. Emergency rooms will be flooded. People with chronic conditions like heart disease and diabetes will not get the regular care they need, and will suffer catastrophic consequences.
- Today, we are thankful to our state's elected leaders who have boldly proclaimed that they will stand up for the progress of California and on behalf of our patients, ask them to stay the course.
- We are also thankful for our partners in Congress, who have visited our health centers, met our patients, and long recognized health centers 50 year track record of providing high quality, cost effective care to our most vulnerable communities.
- Because of these strong relationships, we are hopeful that the health of our patients will be at the front and center of upcoming policy discussions and will help protect the safety-net that we have built over the past fifty years.

(Updated November 14, 2016)