Dear Majority Leader McConnell/Leader Schumer/Speaker Ryan/Leader Pelosi:

I write to you today as a strong champion of our nation’s Community Health Centers, who as you know provide high-quality primary and preventive care to more than 27 million patients in nearly 11,000 communities nationwide. I want to express my steadfast commitment to working with you to extend critical funding that supports health centers on a long-term basis before it expires on September 30.

I am fully aware that we have many significant issues in need of our attention this fall. But one thing we must prioritize is the extension of funding for the Community Health Centers Program. If we don’t act to extend this critical funding, health centers will face a 70% reduction in federal support. According to estimates from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), that level of reduction would lead to closure of roughly 2,800 health center locations, loss of more than 50,000 jobs, and most importantly, a loss of access to care for 9 million patients.

We simply cannot put health centers and their patients at risk. Without continued funding we would jeopardize the critical progress health centers have made in improving access to medical care, behavioral health, dental care, and – increasingly – the substance use disorder treatment needed to combat national challenges like the opioid epidemic. In my district/state, we have XX health center organizations who collectively leverage $XX million in federal investment to serve XX,XXX people at XX locations. (See <http://www.nachc.org/congressional-district-fact-sheets/> or <http://www.nachc.org/research-and-data/state-level-data-maps/>) They are the leaders in providing integrated care that leads to better health outcomes for patients, and to cost-savings, both for the health care system as a whole and for the taxpayer. I’ve been to many of these locations, and seen firsthand what a difference these organizations make in the lives of our neighbors, and in the health of our communities.

Two years ago, in this body we voted overwhelmingly to extend funding for health centers as part of the MACRA legislation. Now that the deadline is upon us again, we must act. I support a long-term extension, for at least five years, so that our health centers have the predictability and stability they need to recruit providers, purchase equipment, and plan strategically for how to meet the current and future needs of communities. I strongly support keeping funding levels for CHCs whole, something more than 350 of my colleagues in both the House and Senate signed letters supporting earlier this year.

So with so much uncertainty in our health care system, let’s build on consensus and build on success. I appreciate your Leadership on this issue, and I am ready to work with you and all of my colleagues in this body to ensure health centers have the necessary resources to continue their important work now and for many years to come.

Sincerely,