

ACCESS UPDATE

CAMPAIGN FOR
AMERICA'S HEALTH CENTERS

is the
Answer

December 5, 2016

As the dust from the November 8th election continues to settle, we continue to meet with key decision-makers and to assess the direction and legislative plans of the next Congress and the new Administration. What is clear is that the road ahead for health centers and our patients will have serious bumps, unexpected curves and potential opportunities.

Along this road will come challenging threats and debates on the **Health Center Funding Cliff**, the structure and size of the **Medicaid program**, including broad Block Grants for many federal programs, and the elimination of 20 years of growth and progress of the **Health Center Network**. However, we also have numerous opportunities in this environment due to the strong bipartisan support of Health Centers in Congress. In a contentious environment, Health Centers stand out as something both sides of the aisle can agree on and support which will provide an opportunity for Health Centers to serve as an effective **solution** in the health care system as both sides seek to address their priorities.

Make no mistake, the fights ahead will require every single Health Center to **step up and act** as never before. This means going beyond a few leaders staying informed and participating in key calls to action. True commitment means creating a culture of advocacy throughout the Health Center by engaging Board, Staff, Patients and Partners by educating them about what is at stake, their role as advocates, and empowering them to act, repeatedly!

We have to prepare now to hit the ground running in 2017. The following **four action steps** for Health Centers and their Advocates will ensure our advocacy efforts are engaged, informed, prepared and effective:

- 1. Commit to Staying Informed and Mark Your Calendar:** Beginning this month, NACHC will be hosting **monthly in-depth Policy and Advocacy**

Briefings for all health center advocates via interactive webinar. We're committed to keeping you up to speed on the latest developments, asks, messaging and action steps, and to making our staff available to answer questions, discuss strategy and give guidance. These updates will each take place at **3:30pm Eastern Time on the following dates: December 14th, January 18th, February 22nd, and March 21st.** Watch our weekly Washington Update for details on how to register and participate.

2. Complete a Health Center Data Analysis: Part of being able to tell the Health Center story must include data – what are the implications of the funding cliff (a potential 70% cut to grant funding) on YOUR Health Center operations, patients, services and the community at large? Relative to Medicaid – how many of YOUR patients are being served in each FPL bracket under Medicaid? How much of YOUR Health Center revenue derives from Medicaid? What is the financial impact of Medicaid cuts/changes to YOUR Health Center in the context of operations, services, patients etc.? Gathering and analyzing Health Center level data now is a vital aspect of effective advocacy and telling our story through both human stories and hard data.

3. Schedule In-Person Meetings At Home with Members of Congress: Whether it is a brand new or veteran Member of Congress, scheduling in-person meetings at home much in advance of their arrival in DC in January must be an absolute priority. These meetings will provide the opportunity to establish foundational knowledge of Health Centers (particularly for new MOCs), layout what sets Health Centers apart from other providers, and discuss what is at stake in the year ahead in the context of both the Primary Care Funding Cliff and Medicaid. NACHC will provide clear talking points, background information and guidance for these conversations.

4. Prioritize and Begin Building Advocacy Capacity: Whether it be at the federal, state or local level, without question ALL will demand organized, effective and consistent advocacy response to ensure continued support, resources and protection for Health Centers and their patients. The first step must be to establish advocacy infrastructure at the Health Center (and PCA) by engaging and educating board, staff, patients and community leaders, including local and state elected officials, about what is at stake and their role in advocating to support, protect and preserve the Health Center. Building advocacy capacity will be best accomplished at the Health Center and PCA level through the **ACE (Advocacy Centers of Excellence) Program** which lays out a simple framework to build advocacy infrastructure, create a culture of advocacy, and establish protocols and benchmarks for engagement and effective response. You can get more information on how to build internal advocacy infrastructure through the ACE program by visiting www.saveourchcs.org or contacting our grassroots advocacy staff.

For more than 50 years, Health Centers have not only survived, but thrived, because of the strength of our model of care and the value and impact we bring to the health care system and our patients. This does not change. The year ahead will be challenging, but I know that if we are together, we are more than up to the task!

Thank you,

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